



ink

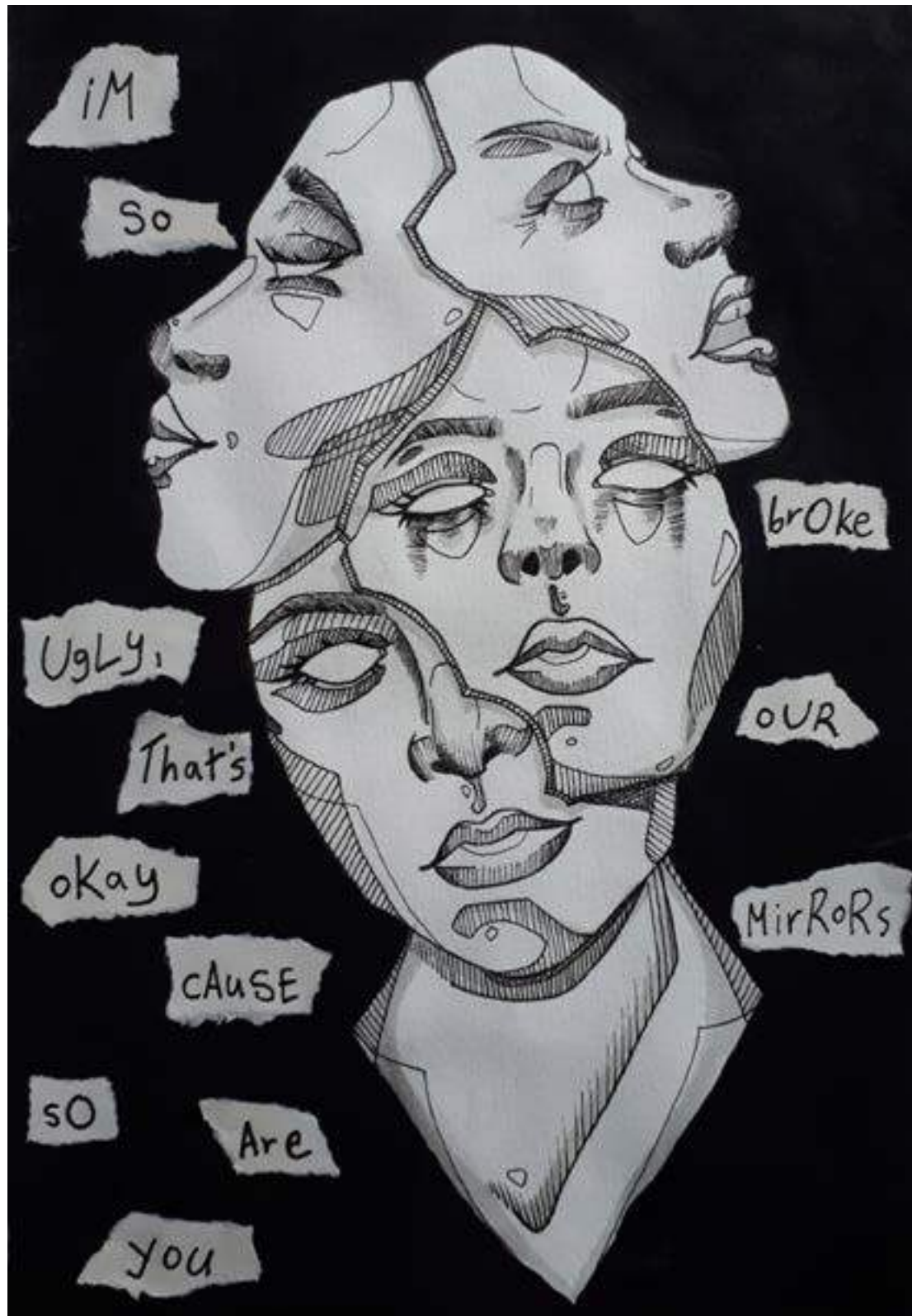
Volume 04

Teen journal for writing and visual art
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FACE YOUR EMOTIONS

Nicole Hagley, Age 18



WELCOME TO *INK* VOLUME 4!

This year has been a momentous one for *ink*! The dream has always been to have teens involved at every step of production. This year, thanks to the dedication of our youth volunteers in the *ink* Teen Advisory Group and funding to support mentorship from professional writers and artists, we were able to make that happen. Each piece of the magazine you hold in your hands has been vetted by the *ink* TAG. Special thanks to our mentors Dawn Lo, Karla Comanda, and Emily Pohl-Weary who steered the selection process for visual art, poetry, and prose. The combined forces of *ink* TAG and professional mentorship took the 2021 issue to the next level.

This year has also been a momentous one for the world. COVID-19 is still shaping our lives (and therefore *ink*), but the situation feels less emergent and has become more like a consistent background stress. We've continued to be physically closed off from the world, and we've had the opportunity to look into our inner selves and grow. The work in *ink* this year contains a lot of honesty about what teens have learned through that self-reflection and how challenging the process has been. Many pieces probe the darker parts of teens' own experiences or tackle difficult subjects through fiction. They also explore topics such as gender, race, migration, and queer and trans experiences.

We want to share our profound gratitude toward all of the contributors who have trusted us with their voices and believed in our ability to deliver them to you, the reader. Huge thanks are also due to the *ink* Teen Advisory group, whose work defined *ink* Volume 4.

And to you the reader, thanks for reading! We hope it inspires you.

Teen Services
Vancouver Public Library
2021



Cover art: *Melody* by Xinyi Li, Age 15

SILENT OWL

Jiabao Wu, Age 15

THANK YOU

to all the artists and writers who contributed to ink!

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“My imagination makes me human and makes me a fool; it gives me all the world and exiles me from it.” —Ursula K. Leguin

AN EXPLORER'S DREAM

Khaliya Rajan, Age 13

On this hot summer morning, the beach and ocean are crowded with everyone from kids screaming because they got sand in their eyes to adults swimming. At one end of the beach is a mountain looking abandoned, but for me it is the perfect place to read. As I walk closer to the mountain, I see that some rocks seem to have formed a door. A breeze pushes my black hair into my face, but I ignore it. My eyes are fixed upon the rocky door. I wonder what is behind it and think about why no one has ever seen it. I cannot hear the crowd anymore. I cannot smell the ocean. I put my hands on the door and push. It swings open and a gust of cold air surrounds me. Bang! The door closes. It is dark, and though I am about 90% afraid, I am also 10% excited. Since I was little, I have wanted to be an explorer like my aunt who lived with me for five years. We became super close and I have always wanted to follow in her footsteps. This cave seems undiscovered, and I would be the first one.

On my right, I see a cliff wall, a piece of rope, and a hook. Shivering, I put my book aside and use my hands, feet, the rope and the hook to climb the wall. Halfway, my grip starts to slip and my fear increases. I use one hand to grab the rope. Now I am dangling. My knee bangs against the rock and I feel blood drip down my leg. I could just climb down, leave this magical cave, and never look back. It seems so easy to do. My explorer dream floats back inside my head. I would be giving up if I went back. I would fail. I think about my aunt, and I know she would not give up, so I decide to persevere. With new determination, I climb to the top of the cliff. A smile spreads across my face. I still have the cut, but I am 100% happy. I did it. I walk forward to a table to see a scroll and two bottles of ink. I pick up the scroll and read.

*Draw a heart on the desk using the ink.
Five bottles will appear, each with a different coloured drink.
What do you do with them? You may ask.
You must drink the correct bottle to complete the task.*

*The red one will make you sick.
The pink one might do the trick.
The green one will give you food.
But it will also put you in a forgetful mood.*

*One will teleport you back,
You will not stop laughing if you drink the black
The blue one is healthy and will let you rest
Choose the one that is the best.*

I draw on the rocky, uneven desk and the bottles appear. Red, pink, green, black and blue. I immediately eliminate the red, black and green ones. Is it the pink or the blue one that will teleport me back? The blue one says it will let me rest, which probably means it will take me back. I wonder if I should just drink the pink one, but then maybe it will teleport me. This is really difficult, and I wonder if I should turn back. I decide to continue because I still want to become an explorer like my aunt. I go ahead and drink the contents in the pink bottle because I think my aunt would do so. The wall vanishes.

I walk over to a rock with paper and read it. It tells me that I am about to do a scavenger hunt with two clues and the last clue will lead me to treasure. My heart races. I can feel it thumping, like sticks hitting a drum. My mind is thinking only about the treasure and my childhood dream coming true as I read the first clue and complete the task, which is to find a key. I read the clue on the key saying that I must run through the rest of the cave until I find a treasure chest. I start bolting, holding the key. My palms are sweaty, but I am grinning. My energy increases when I spot the chest. I kneel, and put the key in the lock. My heart is pounding faster and harder than ever. It opens. I peer inside the chest and see tons of gold and jewels and artifacts including fossils and an old compass. A grin spreads across my face, from ear to ear. I am an explorer! I decide I need to tell my parents, my aunt, and the world what I have discovered. I run the way I came, and a slide appears at the edge of the cliff, which I use.

The door swings open for me, and I run out and keep running until I get home. My parents and aunt walk over to me. I forgot my aunt was coming over. I tell them everything that happened today. They hug me and promise me I can show them the cave the next day since it is dark and very late. The next day, my aunt brings a few people and I take them through the cave and the challenges to get to the chest. Soon, it is on the news and I am famous. Cameras follow me around and my aunt is extremely proud of me, constantly hugging me. My dream has come true. I am an explorer. Once the treasure has been examined, they tell me it is mine. I keep some and donate some. I will always remember this adventure: the day I saw the door, the day my life changed, the day I followed in my aunt's footsteps and became an explorer.

MIDDAY

Vicky Nguyen, Age 16



HOMELAND

Vicky Nguyen, Age 16

Around the streets at night
on a Honda moped
helmet strap tight on chin
the river breezes blow the dusty leaves
of the resin trees along District 1.
Standing like solemn guards of the city, they
watch over
empty food stalls with their owners
in a haze of slumber
on the Formica table,
beside the bubbling *hủ tiếu* broth.
The leaves drop a pitying gaze
to the night street sweeper
sweeping trash from the narrowest alleys
with cracked-painted houses no more than six feet wide
to the main streets shimmering under the lights
of caviar-scented, gold-latticed hotels
with red carpet imprinted rose pumps.
The branches don't wince
when they watch over
a rat scurrying under a heap
of boba tea leftovers and fried fish balls
dripped in MSG-filled soy sauce
left on the grass
not far from the Gucci glass showcases of Diamond Plaza.
The petals of resin flowers don't wilt
immediately upon landing
on a sweaty uniform shirt
belonging to a middle school kid
who slept behind the motorcycle, on his mother's back
on his way home from extra classes.
High up above the streetlights
the wind carried words from the trees
to ask me if I would still love
amid this hubbub of a so-called Beta city
tipping southeast of the Indochina Peninsula
with its name stemming from cotton trees
where the word "hoa lệ"
"opulent" in Vietnamese
describes all its 2,061 km²
"hoa" - flowers - for the rich
"lệ" - tears - for the poor.
I whisper among the breezes,
"This has always been my home,
and forever will be."

Saigon, May 2021

GLINTING

Jessica Qi, Age 15



MODEL MINORITY

Aileen Wu, Age 16

Among the headlines in the New York Times:
The Chinese Threat to American Speech—
how “dystopian,” “totalitarian” Chinese
will take over the West and expand their reach,

but surely Asians won’t pay the price,
(you’re the model minority, but you’re also spies)
just hold your head down, get good grades,
and do not dare vocalize —protest—defy

for that juxtaposes your value to this country
as docile, compliant, submissive minorities
or your women who serve the white man’s fetish;
their desire turned into infantilization—

you toil until you’re stretched thin
like bow hairs against the untuned violin
you reluctantly play to please your mother in
an apathetic melody of fleeting shrill notes—

highly-skilled tiger parents in upper-middle suburbs
and cutthroat children computer science-bound—
in the name of assimilation, proximity to whiteness
but white KKKanada and AmeriKKKa couldn’t care less;

a white man with a self-proclaimed “sex addiction”
shoots six Asian working-class women in an Atlanta spa
and the New York Times asks,
Why Has There Been a Spike of Anti-Asian Hate?

ON OUR HIGHWAY WE WILL STOP TO WATCH THE SUN

Nguyễn Ngọc Tâm Nghi (Nghi Nguyen), Age 16

I hate spring weather, the kind that makes you debate whether short shorts are appropriate because the sky is sunny but not yet warm. A refresher to the dead of winter, and you want to read love poems as you bask in the sun, but you can't just yet because the clouds won't cooperate. Listen to the birds chirp outside as they migrate home. It's spring break again. This time last year, I remember clearly the exact state of mind I was in. (If it's not clear, it wasn't a good place.) In the year in between, you have witnessed me change much, in dress, in attitude, in confidence, in expression; perhaps this spring will be different than the rest.

Warm weather brings out freedom and ambitions and too much free time. Cold guilt seeps in my stomach as it often does when neither school nor work nor someone of a higher power mandates me to be present elsewhere. Being home for a purpose other than crashing at night is strange. Being home with energy to write. The act of leaving the confines of my apartment solidifies the idea of productivity in my head even if nothing actually gets done. Physically exhausting myself distracts me, prevents the waterworks of my emotions from idling. The air is breezy but our minds are so still, and the only thing I've done today is eat and sleep in and think about not wanting to think. A car that idles wastes potential energy, or maybe it just needed to rest lest it overheat.

Two weeks is too short and soon enough we'll be voluntarily sucked back into the hustling vacuum of life to run as fast, as far as we can, hoping we don't combust in the process. Too short in the beginning and end, but in the moment, seconds stretch into hours. The day will end and you'll realize you did nothing in the time between the sun's wake and sleep but watch it do so. I haven't slowed down in so long on this highway. Boredom breeds creativity – and maybe creating won't get me college acceptance letters or fill up my chequing account or tick off boxes in my Google Keep, but it's helping my engine not explode as I get to my dreamy destination. We don't have

to be great all the time. Watch us commit sloth. Let's pull over and take pictures of our youth.

Only in spring is the grass both green and dry enough for picnics. Let's raid our parents' pantries to make bagel sandwiches. Let's pull out our Bluetooth speakers and dance poorly to gay albums. Let's annotate each other's books. Let's cut our cakes with wine glasses and eat Pocky sticks amongst other trendy things. Or if the weather is stupid like I predict, can we go inside and mess with hot glue guns and beads and felt? Let's find dollar store acrylics and follow Bob Ross tutorials. Let's paint our nails and bake banana bread. Is there a board game that you're bad at? If so, I would like us to play that. Let's cuddle in your bed and watch some horrible rom-coms. We need to relearn how to have fun. I want to experience joy caused by actions I didn't plan to capitalize off of, joy not caused by watching screens flash for hours and hours because I need to overstimulate myself, joy that is pure. (Also, preferably joy that requires the least money. I don't work so hard so we can spend money for fun.)

This spring I want to appreciate the sightseeing spots along our road trip. I want to appreciate the mundane minutes and time we have to just ourselves, even though the tasks we have yet to do hang over us like grey clouds and make us sick. I want to rest in your arms for hours and not do anything else. Inspect my gears and you can nail the reason for this common illness: we've ingrained in our heads, re-engineered our thought processes, so that you're never satisfied with what you are, so you must convince yourself you're always working for what you can have. Doing nothing is a crime. No, I'm not suggesting we don't know our destination or that we should pick a different route, but I think we should take into perspective how long it would take to cross the continent to adulthood. We've progressed fast and we'll keep getting there. A few seconds to stop and look around won't mean anything.

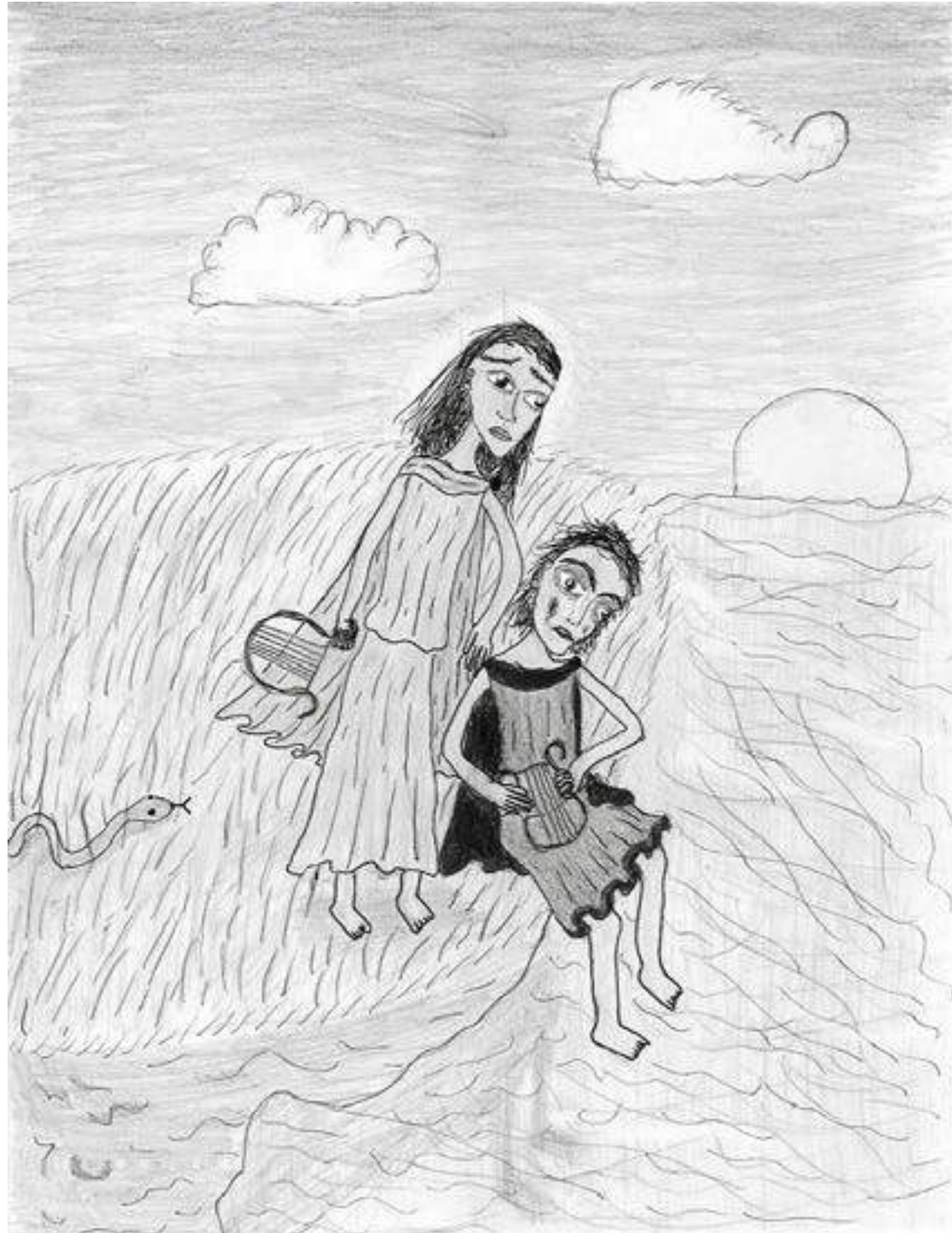
FRESH START

Teagan Eves, Age 15



ORPHEUS AND CALLIOPE (AFTER ORPHEUS' DESCENT INTO THE UNDERWORLD)

Raspberry Yow-Fairs, Age 13



FAMILIAR STRANGERS

Aileen Wu, Age 16

You used to be a comforting presence
where I could slack my shoulders,
lower my arched eyebrows,
and slump into your warm embrace
as we crack jokes until the crack of dawn;

You were the breezy summer nights
where the constellations winked at us,
encouraging our mischievous endeavours
for what felt like an eternity.

As quickly as a storm cloud settles over
the place where we used to stargaze,
your familiar face becomes a stranger,
now an uninvited intruder in my brain.

The atmosphere,
now rife with
restless
thoughts
and
untold
questions
and
unfinished
goodbyes.

PASSION

Nhi Do, Age 17



Content Note: gun violence, depression

HOW I FEEL

Anonymous, Age 14

Trigger pulled
'cause of something small
precipitation slides down my face
red stains on my garments
held captive by a dark room
while making footprints in the snow
I fell down a deep, dark hole
Feeling warmth on my skin is something I yearn for
But I will never get it
This is where I reside
I don't have the motivation to get out
The only thing I can do
Is to prevent anyone falling in with me

RAINY DAYS

Chloe Jiatong Lin, Age 16

it's raining where you live
pouring miserable rain
and you stare out the window
while you bemoan to me
over the phone
about how terrible the rain is
how your day and your plans
are completely and utterly ruined
you tell others too
about how much you hate the rain
and how it should rain everywhere
you tell me you wish
that it was raining where i was

and i explain that that's not how it works
you can't just wish rain like that
you can't make everyone miserable
just because you are
you get angry at me
you yell scream at me
you even almost throw your phone
across the room because
you wish it rained where i lived
pouring miserable rain
that makes you dreary and gloomy
and it's only fair that i
and the entire world feel like that too

but you have to understand
that just because
you're miserable doesn't mean
that i have to be
and that just because
your day is ruined
doesn't mean you have to ruin mine
i'll be here to listen
and offer comforting words
but you're crossing the line
if you're trying
to pass your anger onto me
just so you don't have to deal with it anymore
because even if it rains
some of us know how to open an umbrella

AFTERMATH OF RAIN

Emily Lee, Age 18



LIGHTHOUSE OR BEEHIVE

Rowan Levens, Age 16

My mother was the first to know I was a girl, her intuition stretching beyond reason and latching on to a feeling, and they say “mother knows best.” It was reconfirmed when her wedding ring began rotating around her belly, circling and circling over top of me. Did the pseudo party trick really mean something? Did it feel the same thing my mother did? Did it know I was a girl? Do I know? Or was it decided the moment I won the race of life, just to find out, after all this time, I never chose to win. It astounds me how the impossibly small change of surviving a fire, in a jar, in a UBC refrigeration centre, has left me wishing for more than what I already have.

Am I ungrateful? Too caught up in my own self I can't realize what life has given me? Honestly, it feels like it's taken just as much, and I'm stuck wondering if I'm lucky, unlucky, or overthinking it (probably the latter). Was it decided when the stars aligned in such a way that a random Babylonian saw the visage of a crab, on a year dedicated to monkeys, on a day dedicated to me. I am a Cancer Crab, meaningless to most, but more and more I find myself aligning with what my star sign tells me. Crabs symbolize trust, emotions, and the cyclicity of life. Crabs shed their shells and are reborn anew. I want to be reborn anew.

“The fact is, for all we learn about ourselves, for all we codify and classify and define, the mysteries remain immense.” (*The Witching Hour* p. 201). My mother named me after Rowan Mayfair, from *The Witching Hour*. Her sleek figure, soft grey eyes, blinding blond hair; I'd gladly give up my life to be a witch in a story book. My mother named me for a reason, she had an intuition, ethereal knowledge, far stronger and more powerful than what any x-ray could tell you. She saw between the barriers of mind and body. Where are those lines drawn? Does my brain, never resting, always busy, influence my body, used and sore, clunky and rigid, square shaped and hair draped.

Do I hate my body? Well for starters I want to pick every last hair off my body until all that's left is my head. I want to be told by my doctor that my test results were positive, Cancer, Stage 4, testicular, immediate surgery required. The thought of sitting knee over knee and feeling comfortable not have a bulge between my legs, not worrying whenever it bulges out too much, or how big/small it is, or how crooked or misshapen it is, to just let it go would so freeing, so me. I want to feel curvy, my hands rolling off my butt smooth as butter, skin fresh from an evening's shower, hair silky and smooth flowing off to its respective sides. Where does desire differ from dysphoria? I was born a man, and surgery is too daunting, too expensive, too tempting. So I'm stuck feeling like shit, wondering if anything I do matters, will my choices last, will they matter?

How do I know if I'm digging too deep, finding coincidence from nonsense, drawing conclusions from illusion? The first time I ever wore heels, I felt like a goddess, watching as a crowd of twelve year olds were dancing to songs they never heard of; as I played Dancing Queen I was the DJ Queen. My mother used to take me to girl guides out of necessity, I chose to stay for an extra year out of desire. When she stopped going, I couldn't keep going, but I never forgot how much I love making pins for my bucket hat. Dancing is a hidden mystery, waiting to be solved. Each unit of square dancing brought dread upon the masses but not me. I'd sing every song, remember every footstep, line up at the back so I could fill in as a girl for the day.

Would I have had these thoughts growing up in a normal household, one where I was free to fully express myself, one where I didn't feel like the dividing force, the cause of tension, the reason for divorce? Could I have tackled my problems earlier on in life instead of ignoring them and shoving them deep down inside me. I envy those with sta-

ble parental relationships. They have a sense of sanctity, a sense of security. They don't struggle to talk to their parents about their day at school, don't seek out every opportunity to hide and disguise the truth.

I could tough it out, “be a man,” as my father would say. But no, no I don't think I will, I'm tired of be-

ing a man, being held up to a standard. When you look at me, I wanna see your eyes question what's before you, I wanna be seen as me, no assumptions, no interpretations, no expectations. If you spend the time to determine who I am, you'll find the same answer as everyone else. “That's Rowan.” “Her name's Rowan.” “Rowan's their name.” and I wouldn't have it any other way.

CRISIS

Nico Cullen McKnight, Age 16



society

Catherine Diyakonov, Age 16

we are told to be "different."
"be unique!"
"your flaws are special."
"there's no one else like you!"

so you try to be "different."
you experiment with your clothes,
try a new hairstyle,
and remove your makeup they all call cake.

but it's funny, isn't it?

whenever you try,
whatever you try,
you are constantly told four special words.
"you don't fit in."

but aren't i supposed to be this "different,"
"unique,"
"special,"
person?

aren't i supposed to stand out from the crowd?

no... not at all.
no, scratch that.
"fit in with the crowd,"
those who once told you to stand out shout.

don't reveal your flaws
and never reveal the aspects which make you, you.
"confidence is arrogance,"
those who lack it say.

who are they to say what you can and can not do?

flaunt your confidence;
the confidence which simply turns flaws into traits.

be the one to erase *society's* flaws.

COME ONE, COME ALL

Charlotte Gilhuly, Age 16

FADE IN:

PLAZA OF MAIN STREET AND ORSON AVENUE – EVENING

The dim glow of streetlamps reveals a cobbled street. Posters advertising “CAIN CARNIVAL AND CURIOSITIES” decorate lamp posts and shop windows.

Stark against the yellow lamplight in his high-collared overcoat, the CARNIVAL MASTER stands in the middle of the street. A top hat keeps the upper half of his face in shadow. His crisp, white collared shirt glows, and ram-headed cane reflects the dim lighting.

Multiple figures stir and stand behind the Carnival Master, obscured in the shadows.

The Carnival Master spreads his arms, speaking loudly.

CARNIVAL MASTER

Come one, come all! The Cain Carnival and Curiosities has arrived in town!

Cheers fill the night air. The Carnival Master bows slightly.

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

Featuring everything your soul could ever dream of—from this world and beyond—including, but not limited to: the Sky-Dwelling Siblings...

Thin stilts stalk out of the shadowy alley, clicking against the stone streets.

The other ends of the stilts remain far out of sight, no matter how high up one looks.

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

The Living Tale, possessing storytelling skills to be envied...

THE LIVING TALE steps into the light, illuminating a full spread of tattoos. From the crown of their head, and reaching past their calves. Each illustration seems to shimmer and sway, only brushstrokes away from lifelike perfection. The singing lady perched on their shoulder... Is that fear in her eyes? No... It must be the lighting.

The tapestry of their skin is truly a work of art.

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

Visit Mother Milhoja's kitchen!

MOTHER MILHOJA, a plump and petite woman wrapped in layers of thick coats, steps forward and curtsies.

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

With an abundance of sweets and treats, there's always space at Mother Milhoja's table. Come for snacks and stay for the show.

Smiling, Mother Milhoja produces a lit match, and blows an arc of fire into the air. Briefly illuminated, most of the figures behind the Carnival Master seem normal enough.

As the fire dissipates, Mother Milhoja licks her lips. Just once. But it's enough to notice...

It's fine. No big deal. She's surely a lovely woman.

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

And, for this week only, I have the honour of presenting to you... the Demonic One.

THE DEMONIC ONE sweeps forward, cape flaring, braid dangling. Two lumps protrude from his forehead.

His eyes seem to consume the already dim light...

His pupils... Those eyes...

It's-

CARNIVAL MASTER (CONT'D)

Ladies, gentlemen, the cryptid and otherworldly - come one, come all! Come, for a night at Cain Carnival and Curiosities.

(grins wickedly, tilting hat forwards)

It's an experience to die for.

BLACK OUT.

WALLOWING IN THE YANGTZE

Mathew Fu, Age 15

Along my veins,
The rocks jut like blooming diaspora.
I fingerprint the waves
And it prunes skin like lantern folds.
Rice paper palms that shed
 again
 and
 again.

I don't remember the dying,
Only how moonlight bleached my hands in ivory.
I don't remember the birthing,
Only how tongues limned my teeth in gold.
This is the renewal:
Where salt will pacify wounds,
And jade will gentrify skin.
I coax the waters to open for me,
To swallow my swollen soles.
This is home.
Where blood ruptures like firecrackers
And bodies are lined with lies.

Sink your fingers into golden sand.
It'll be warm I promise,
I promise it'll be warm,
Lullabies, nightmares
Rabbits in cable snares,
This is a bony phantasm,
This is a dying renewal,
This is home,
Where railroad echoes
Still find me drowning.

CITY OF DREAMS

Amy, Age 17



AN ODE TO MY MOM

Danika Poon

i look for you everywhere.
i look for you
in the men i infatuate myself with
whose eyes won't accuse me of dishonour
whose lips won't tell me i'm worthless,
molding my love language into quality time
you never made for me
words of affirmation
you never said to me, with hands
that came down on my cheeks, bruising flesh like a ripened peach.
i look for you everywhere.
in the grades i receive
and the degrees i'll obtain
i don't know how to not search for you,
to not search for the validation you kept from me,
leaving me high and dry,
to wander the darkness of adolescence alone,
in a solitude i never asked for,
i never wanted,
throwing me to the wolves and laughing as they tear me
fibre for fibre,
limb for limb,
until i am screaming in anguish,
in ancient pain,
please, mommy!
help me.
you dangle your domination in front of me,
over my neck like a guillotine,
lighter to the cigarette between my teeth.
i look for your validation in everything i do
because all you ever did,
was invalidate me.

i am stuck in my childhood,
i am stuck in the seven year old version of myself
who demanded but a kiss goodnight
and Three Words that cost nothing.
not a second later than i blow out my birthday candle
on july second of every year,
you remind me
of how you almost aborted me,
how i was a decision away from becoming medical waste,
how you didn't want me.

i cannot grow up and out
of this mindset i have been branded with,
that you have branded me with.
you have driven me
to the brink of insanity,
teetering on the edge of a cliff,
i stare into the abyss of escape,
never understanding
why you didn't – don't – love me
when i only ever wanted to feel love for you.
i look for you everywhere,
because all i'll ever want is to love you.

i don't want to hate you, mom
but i don't have a choice.
you didn't give me a choice.

MY ANGEL

Jessica Qi, Age 15

Outside the car window, the rain was thinning. The raindrops stubbornly sticking to the glass turned into sharp needles. Tall, grey buildings suddenly came into sight. I watched the airport terminal signs flash by until we arrived at International Departures at Shanghai Pudong Airport. Seven years ago, when I was eight years old, I was dragged away from my friends in Canada by my mom, so I wouldn't forget my "native language." Now I was headed back to Vancouver. Ironically, I would have to relearn English, a language that came so easily to me the first time.

As we pulled into the loading area, my fingernails sank into my thighs until I couldn't feel the pain anymore. I kept looking ahead, but I couldn't stop thinking about my older sister, who sat next to me, staring at my class schedules for the upcoming school year. There was a time—when we were fighting over things like who got to eat the last piece of salmon sashimi, and who got to use the iPad—that I used to dream about today, about how I could finally have her out of my life.

It was time for me to get my luggage from the trunk. Gingerly, I stepped out of the car, pressing both my feet carefully onto the floor. Mom told me to find a cart. I ran around the busy departure hall and finally found a few carts resting in a corner, like expired pints of Haagen-Dazs in the scullery.

I felt like a lonely cart once.

"She has to repeat grade one again because she's stupid and doesn't know how to speak Chinese even though she looks Chinese." I remembered the whispers that surrounded me on my first day of school when I first arrived back in China. I had no friends, and quickly learned to hide in the corner whenever we had group projects.

One day, when I got home from school, my sister

teased me like she usually did about how she beat me to the biggest piece of Godiva chocolate in the box. When she noticed my silence, and crouched down beside me, I told her about the pranks my classmates played on me and how my teachers didn't care.

I don't know what my sister did, but she must've done something, because miraculously, my teachers started paying more attention to me, and I began to make some friends. She still teased me from time to time, but she was also my big sister now.

"Come back! The line is here!" My sister's voice snapped me back to reality.

Hastily, I chose a cart and ran all the way back to her. I saw myself in her glistening eyes. They were like two miraculous bits of violet amber that were keeping me intact.

My sister smiled rigidly as I looked back at her from the security screening line.

"Stay safe and healthy," she said.

"I will."

I turned around, stared determinedly at the bright green ad for a second-hand car dealership on my cart's handle, and gripped it even more tightly.

"I love you!" my sister's husky voice shot through the security gate.

"Me too!" I called back to her.

I turned a second time to look at her again. The sun was out. It was like a shiny, brilliant egg yolk, and enveloped her in a golden glow.

HOWL'S PRIVATE STUDY

Lina Baang, Age 16



THE SUN AND MOON

Evan Wong, Age 16

Happiness sends its warm embrace
Providing this feeling of a safe place
Like a comforting and soothing wave
Once experienced, everyone will crave
Its arms reaching out, enveloping me
From head to toe, elbow to knee
Feelings of relaxation and content
With no harmful or negative intent

But everything has an end
Following its repeating trend
This experience does so as well
But when? Only time will tell

Darkness begins to encompass the sky
The approach of dread is nigh
Calm, but darkened and eerie
A sense of unrecognized dreary
Instead of being soft to the touch
You feel trapped in its clutch
Hoping to return to its prior form and escape
To depart from this foreign landscape

Returning to this peaceful atmosphere
The daylight and brightness reappear
All these emotions will have a redo
As the day has started over anew

RECALLING ON IMPULSE

Victoria Cai, Age 13

In a small lagoon, the azure inland sea glistened under the sun, the placid water parted ways, welcoming a wooden boat. It sailed effortlessly through the waters, until it turned and bumped deep into a water lily bed.

Juliet looked out at the horizon with her eyebrows furrowed. She slowly dipped her hands into the water, trying to separate the oar from the entwining stems. Sofie, sitting across, rested her head on her slender fingers. Unlike Juliet, her face was still pleasant and clean, her eyes peered into the crystalline sky, donned in drowsy languor.

After many failed attempts to free the oar out of the water lilies, Juliet leaned against the sides of the boat, catching her breath, "Sofie, you're not helping!"

Sofie carefully patted the dust off her dress, letting it serve as a protective bubble for her legs. "What do you expect me to do?"

Juliet wailed, rolling her eyes in frustration, "If you're not going to help, then don't be such a pest!" So, she switched her attention and went down into the water to see if she could loosen those sturdy stems, but to no avail. Finally, she gave up, climbing aboard, dripping in a mixture of water and sweat.

"See, I told you that it's not going to work!" Sofie's eyes twinkled, "Let's just wait and my knights in shining armor will come forth!"

Juliet felt her eyelids droop, "Fine, we'll give that a chance." Her enthusiasm swallowed by the monster of hopelessness.

The sun started drifting down the westward staircase. After the sun came its children, the colours of the sky. First came yellow, followed by orange, red, pink, purple, and finally black. Pitch black.

However, the gentle glow of the moon turned it into a deep, dark shade of starry blue. Everything was silent. The only sound was the breathing of two girls under fallen starlight, in an ocean of lapis lazuli.

Sofie had just woken up from her nap when she saw Juliet's eyes looking bloodshot.

"Look, no one came!" Juliet felt her heart rate increase. "Do you not realize that we just wasted an entire afternoon by listening to your suggestion!"

"Well, it's not that bad! I got to spend the entire afternoon looking at my beautiful reflection." Sofie's eyes glued to the water.

Juliet felt redness flush her cheeks. "You, you... you... spoiled Barbie!"

"My dress is purple, my eyes are black, and my hair isn't even blonde! Raquelle would have been a better one!" Sofie rolled her eyes.

"Are you out of your mind! Look at the situation we're in! And you're still worrying about metaphors? Do what you want, I'll go down to fix the boat." Juliet clenched her teeth and went into the waters, again trying to free the oar out of the water lilies.

Sofie fidgeted with a strand of her silky hair, "Hmm... so do you think I should use the rose scent or the lavender scent?"

SILENCE

Sofie got up and scanned her surroundings, realizing that Juliet must have fallen into the lagoon. She had no choice but to rescue her because she needed Juliet to row the boat and even if she

thought that Juliet was annoying, she didn't necessarily want her gone, so she took a deep breath and dived in.

Under the water was like a kingdom of its own, a dark kingdom. Sofie grasped the fair glow of the moon and searched for Juliet, thankful that she could swim. She found Juliet's body lying unconscious on a gray rock at the bottom of the lagoon. Sofie picked her up. Juliet was heavy, she thought as she swam to the bubbling surface.

Water fell from Sofie's gown, and soon she fell asleep as tiredness overcame her.

Hours passed and the sun ascended the eastward staircase, following her were again its children, but this time in reverse order. Blurry mists enveloped the blue sky. Slowly the mist evaporated, opening its curtains, revealing a cloudless, infinite sky. The ocean blended with the sky and the crystal skyline gave off a delicate silhouette, the vibrant, blue canvas, sapphire cerulean, painted not a single white stroke on its ceiling.

Juliet slowly opened her eyes; she stared blankly at the sky.

"You're awake!" Sofie cheered. Juliet looked over her shoulders and saw Sofie hovering over her tender head, black pupils pouring into hers.

"Good job, Sofie, not bad." Juliet hardly even raised a single eyebrow after Sofie had told her what happened. This girl does have some use, she thought.

"Not bad? What do you mean by not bad!" Sofie's mouth formed a perfect O. "You should've been on your knees thanking me! If it wasn't for me you would've drowned!"

Juliet looked over at her oar, thoughts of yesterday flashed through her head. She scrambled up in panic. "I'll steer the boat." Knowing full well of the passing hours.

Sofie was about to let Juliet do all the work, while she would go back to admiring her reflection in the waters. However, judging from the lost time, she gave in and decided to help.

Together, they untangled stems after stems, and miracles of miracles, finally freed the oar.

"Now that I've helped free your oar, you have to answer my question," Sofie flipped her hair.

"What question?"

"Should I use the lavender scent or the rose scent?"

"You don't need to apply a scent anymore," Juliet smiled. "You already smell like water lilies."

Time flies as a sizzle of rain drops from the sky, creating ripples, blurring my reflection. The scent of the water lilies brings back poignant memories. Once Sofie and Juliet are already far out into the sea, I walk out from the water lily bed. Oh, spying makes my legs sore! I follow the sounds of their voices in a tiny craft of my own. Yes, the shouts of Sofie and Juliet can still be heard across tender, jade-green waters.

UNTITLED

Hannah Wicki, Age 18



SIREN SONG

Marian Manapat, Age 18

Will I find beauty though I don't find love?
These maps are false leads that I can't follow
The sands of islands glint golden enough
But brushed away, I find fool's gold below
I've tossed dim dreams into foaming waters
And cry like they've dived into divine sea
It must be my face 'side glowing daughters'
For no kind man's compass has led to me
But if the winds of peace don't pull me now
I must not be ready for the ocean
If I'm unsteady 'neath light skies, then how
Can I feel loved without devotion?
For until I can love my loveless beauty
One of coarse seas can't anchor safe in me

WHO AM I TO BLAME?

Anzi De leon, Age 17

THIGH GAP

Chloe Jiatong Lin, Age 16

twelve year old girls with soft stomachs
jealous of abs and thin people
planks and music videos of slender singers during recess
whispers of willowy girls ad photos of skinny celebrities at lunch

i was sick sick sick
in the body but also where people couldn't see
tired of life but thin thin thin
flat-ish stomach and thigh gap
my phone would fall through my legs
and my friends would look on enviously

my friends could see my skin
thick thick red patches of eczema everywhere
they could see my tired eyes
falling asleep during a math test
but they couldn't see my thoughts
the loud loud relentless words in my head
because i hid those very carefully
tucked them away when i was with others
my skin was broken
and i pretended my mind wasn't

couldn't sleep at night
tossed and turned
didn't know who i was and why i was here
wondered how long i had to be alive
but hey hey hey
at least i was skinny, right?

easy to lie about things
that others don't know about
easy to turn up the corners of your mouth
and laugh at the right time
easy to swallow pills without water
when you do it every night
but when the evidence is written all over your body
you cannot hide
ugly ugly skin
and yet when your body is thin thin thin
at least you have achieved one thing in life:
strange stupid societal standards



HOME AGAIN

Lucy Graham, Age 15

THE UNHEARD HEARTBEAT

Vanushka Dewan, Age 16

The thumping of her heart beating next to mine provided me solace as I wept on her shoulder. It was tempting for me to tell her, but I knew I could not do it. She had spent the past week yearning for this moment. "Why are you crying? Did he call?" she said with slight distress in her voice, as if she knew what was coming next.

However, her eyes lit up with a glimmer of hope when I said, "Yes he did call." I lied to her because I knew that her tender heart could not have borne such an abounding loss. She sat next to the window and looked down as her leg tremored with anxiety. Our youngest sister, Sylvia, sat down next to her and tried to calm her down. They were tense because neither of them knew what I had done.

"I should just go downstairs and wait for him in the driveway!" exclaimed Alyse. Sylvia jumped out of her chair in agreement and followed her. I wiped my tears away and followed my sisters down the ashy-white carpeted stairs. As the daylight began to dim into a still night, I started to prepare dinner. When it fell out of my pocket, and both my sisters stood, startled.

"Why do you have my swiss knife, Cathy?" asked Alyse.

"I saw it on your bed so I thought I would get it out of the way for you"

"I hear a car! Oh, never mind that's not him," said Sylvia and grasped our attention away from the knife. I grabbed Alyse and sat her down., embracing her body in a protective hug.

They wanted him to come home, the person who raised me to believe that I deserved everything I went through. He asked to stop overthinking the way he violated me. He made me contemplate my sexuality because to him, I had "a sexual aura". I was thirteen when it first happened. He was a father-figure in my life who returned home every three months, not to see his daughters, but to see me. He left me lifeless like an animal after it had been shot and was gasping for air. Despite all the scars he left on my body, I craved his presence. Alyse and Sylvia never knew about this, only cared about the gifts he would bring them. They would not understand even if I told them about it, because, for them, their "dad" was their superhero. Nonetheless, with every trip he would make, I would console myself thinking he would have started to love me.

He hadn't changed one bit. Even now, those wide-set dead eyes glared at me with lusty intentions. I knew this, as I had already seen him this morning. He hugged me. It felt comforting for a bit, and eventually, I drifted into the delusion of him being my real dad. I could hear his heartbeat next to me as he slipped his hand down my long-sleeved shirt and grabbed my arms. I recognized this grip, as it had the power to shatter my womanhood. "Stop!" I exclaimed but I knew that would only make it worse. He pulled me in closer and turned a deaf ear to my screams. I looked down at my free arms and realized I had made it out of his grip. The room filled with an unfamiliar scent, and there he was, lying in a pool of dark vermillion. For the thumping of her perturbed heartbeat had gotten faster as the lechery of another was lost.



THE GROWTH WITHIN

Alanna Rudolph, Age 16



GRAVEYARD OF ABANDONED THINGS

Emily Lee, Age 18

A still pond
As quiet as a mirror
Silently reflects
The beauty of the surroundings

But the image is now
Broken
Polluted by shopping carts that seem perfectly functional
They tip and tumble as they fall, half-submerged in water
Then simply rest, floating at the surface
Like dead fish

They no longer serve a purpose
But, instead, lie forgotten – for how long? (Eternity?)

Nearby, an orange cone bobbles
A warning sign: stay away!
From the graveyard of abandoned things

[Ekphrastic poem based on Banksy's *Show Me the Monet*]

THE CEDAR

Vicky Nguyen, Age 16

There is a cedar outside the window
Towering over maples and oak trees.
I wonder if it feels any sorrow
Because the blue sky is all it can see.

No, the cedar is not lonely at all
With fragrant leaves twirled like fingers.
In summer, the warblers enthrall
The musky branches with songs that linger.

At dawn, the succulent stems gleam
When the sun engulfs them in golden rays.
Night falls, the cedar withers its leaves and dreams
Of the melodies the sea breezes serenade.

But have you ever noticed the trunk
Stained with dark flowing resins—its tears—
From the spots that have seen cedars struck
By roaring chainsaws all over the years?

TRINKETS AND GLUE

Sophie Kerr, Age 17



WHEN IT HAPPENS

Christophe Manapat, Age 14



PARADISE

Mathew Fu, Age 15

i. Paradise

Escape fleshed their
 grins and seatbelts
 Where steam sunders
 and rain brims.
 burns.

Steer your eyes to lake
 just as they do.
 Preening mirrors splinter
 where rain gleams like glass.
 They will drink the wind and smile:
 Melancholy
 still
 sweet.

Steer your eyes to swan wings.
 Their spines sprouting tessellate mosaics and
 Smudge a neon white.
Pain is still beautiful:
 Feathers bleach on crumpled pebbles,
 suspending like noose on gravel ground.

Pain is still smiling
 Moonlight anointing
 nicked palms
 And veils masking
 chapped lips.
Pain is still beautiful:
 Even in plea to swallowed suns,
 And pledge to crescent wounds.

Powder doesn't last forever
 But beauty is still painful,
 When myriads
 Metastasize on backbones.
 When Smiles splinter
 Like lake water.

Grief is our mask,
Wounds: our beauty,
 We smear tears like lake mist
 And grin.
 Pain will be our paradise.

ii. Para(dies)

Escape found us
 groped by gravel,
 choked by seatbelts.
We savour a murder.

Rain punctures lake skin
 And we will wallow in its grief.
This is how wounds heal.
 Elixirs of carnage quaffed
 And needles swallowed whole.

We still death dance
 In memory.
 Where wind limns our skin
 buried deeper than lakebed and
 glowing opalescent like eyes.
This is how wounds heal:
 Needles that fester in forearms.
How do we live with the dying?
 We carve smiles, bleach teeth.
 Our trunk fills with luggage
 and we still think of bodies.

This is how scars heal.
 Hearse of fireflies,
 Funeral of lake reeds.
 Know that wounds don't last forever:
 Winds will whisper
 And imprint our skin
 like fingers.

We still wound our healing.
 With rocks whiter than bones
 And porous as decay.
This is how wounds heal.
 They goosebump the corpse
 before sinking into grief.

Grief is our home,
Wounds: our gauze.
 Splinter smile when you see stars
 and
 Pain will be our paradise.

DANCING FLAME

Natalie Viegas, Age 17

Atop the grassy hill, there she was
Gazing up at the noon sky
Dancing under the clouds
Watching the bluebirds fly by

Then came thunder
Burning blazes bursting, bolting up from above
The sudden flashes of blasting light like furious shrieks of wrath

Yet she stood there, waving her arms to the beat of the steady wind
Unfazed
She look up, unafraid
Her beaming face invincible to the fiery blazes forcefully shooting down
Still swaying, twirling, spinning delicately

And the passersby stared at her, bewildered, believing she was under a spell
Not knowing she had a story to tell
A beautiful tale of heartache and anguish and grief
But also, of love
Of strength.

The lightning soon faded, disappeared
The sky filled with darkness, lightly sprinkled with stars
Nothing left to be seen – except for her
A vision, a glow, so graceful, so serene
Forever twirling, dancing

For she was more radiant than a star, more powerful than even the most roaring bolt of thunder
Her light – more fierce,
never faltering
She was a flame ablaze in the black of night
A single flame burning brightly in a pained universe

Amidst the storms, the rage, the misery, the darkened black sky above
She danced.

THE PERFECT PEACOCK

Khaliya Rajan, Age 13



WORDS OF THE OTHERWORLD

Nguyễn Ngọc Tâm Nghi (Nghi Nguyen), Age 16

Hom-o-graph [English]

/ˈhɒməʊɡrɑːf/

Noun. each of two or more words spelled the same, yet having different meanings

Such as *bright* to capable minds or aglow like the sun, such as *match* to making lovers meet or an object to strike a flame. Often these words have differing origins and by some coincidence they have come to lodge in the same body. I'm not a linguist. I don't know exhaustively the history of how our tongue came to be. If I choose to believe our evolution leans towards fittest I should rest easy that there are good reasons: as to why the people before us couldn't assign a minute change in spelling, to simply make a visual indicator to differences in the words; as to why the curves and angles of a term embody meanings that are so opposite, so similar, or in most cases, so irrelevant to each other. Irrelevant seemingly but still connected by a word and so therefore not.

Pédéraste [French]

/pedɛʁast/

1. (= pédophile) pederast, or pedophile; a person who engages in the perversion of children
2. (= homosexuel) homosexual, or gay person

Rooting from Greek to spread to the rest of the world. You can define the homograph by putting it into context, a method which defines a multitude of other things. You have done this and so you are this vile thing. You've just told me you are this and you are brave and nothing needs to change. But context bleeds outside the words we put into the sentence, outside of the statements before and after, outside of the conversation, outside of the land we call our country. These words have steeped in history for too long. This was no result of evolution to make our language easier. The two meanings of this word are not coincidental. We derived one meaning from the other because we needed a word already conveniently attached to a heavy weight. The French passed their words to the Vietnamese in their colonization. The Vietnamese shook off the first meaning, but kept the condemnation.

Bê Đê [Vietnamese]

Adj. Noun. homosexual [derogatory], commonly used to describe feminine boys/men, lesbians, transgender people, or those who are visibly queer.

Vietnamese people are scared to speak their language when surrounded by people they don't know. The structure of our language is rigid, formal, and at its highest class dripping with respect. We address our peers as brothers and sisters because they deserve to be treated like family. In the blood-bound family the pronoun system becomes even more complex, extending far past *you* and *I*, past *il* and *elle*. You must consider their age and their relationship to your parents. First and secondary pronouns *I* and *you* take on five versions: *tôi*, *bạn*, *anh* (male, formal), *chị* (female, formal), and *em* (formal). There are no pronouns that break the gender binary. How one speaks Vietnamese is indicative of their class, their education, and their person. When speaking, use formalities and elongated prepositions to signal that your parents taught you well. Honour your family. You must uphold face no matter who you are talking to. You are not gay. Do not embarrass us.

Queer [English]

/kwɪr/

1. *Adj.* odd; strange, abnormal
2. *Adj.* (of a person) homosexual [derogatory]; describes a person whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity as not fitting in with cisgender and heterosexual norms.

Mẹ ơi, Mother, you can be embarrassed or you can be proud, as I am, proud to be queer and different. Look deeper and realize "gay" is a neutral term having no effect on one's intelligence and kindness, realize that the normal is something you and the people around and before you made up. The normal you perceive is one that hurts and kills. The normal is relative and we can change it for ourselves. Decades ago, my people claimed "queer" as their own, gave it new meaning intended to be spoken with pride. Perhaps it will take a while for people to see this new vocabulary as valid and modify their dictionaries but it is neither understanding nor approval we have the energy to seek—when *you* keep chasing us down. It is not even tolerance that you would give.

Giới [Vietnamese]

1. (=thế giới) *Noun.* world, earth, or realm
2. (=giới tính) *Noun.* gender (sex), female or male

In Vietnamese, the word "transgender" means *chuyển giới*, the first term meaning "to change or move," a straightforward thought. Counter-translate the phrase to mean *transforming worlds* or *crossing realms*. Perhaps you have never thought of it that way. You can choose to take the simple interpretation of moving between the male and female but neither of us are simple creatures. No. We will choose to cross the realm of your archaic oppression to one anew. Is it a misunderstanding? Or is it a transfiguration of our language as time moves on to tailor its users better? History is telling. You know the answer. You can choose to come with us to construct a new future of thinking where prejudice is not based on arbitrary beliefs, help us create new ways of addressing and treating one another so as to not trap us in cages, or you can stay. You can stay thinking everyone would stay with you, but soon you'll be the only one left.

STYLE

Jiabao Wu, Age 15



TEACH THEM

Isabelle Chang, Age 18

girls and women
eyes averted
drawing no attention

we are taught
to wear skirts below our knees
and shirts to hide our shoulders
because it would "distract" the boys

for when we go out
wearing a dress just a little too low
in your eyes
all it screams is
"take me"

why must we restrict ourselves
when you lack self-control?
your disrespect for women –
their body, their rights, their life

these attempts to lower harassment levels
all directed at women
"don't wear revealing clothes"
"you put on too much makeup"

why don't you try
educating the boys
teach them about consent and equality
teach them that they are not entitled to us –
that our bodies are not objects to be used

teach them
so that one day
my hand won't be gripping my keys
but pointing to the stars

VACUITY

Xinyi Li, Age 15

Our empty backs
Balance us
While we wait
To sprout wings
One day
And finally
Rise.

But when we did
Merely flying was not enough, we had to soar
So some went up
Up
Up
Icarus to his sun
Until finally dropping
Past you and me
Into oblivion

We watched them plunge.

Those foolish enough to reach out a hand
Plummeted too
Devoured

Our Procrustean words
Shackle us to indistinguishable chatter
Whisper into our hands
Kiss our souls

Seven seconds is all it takes
For you to slap a meager label on a stranger
For a stranger to throw a meager label on you

Control
Is what we want
The ephemeral joy of giving
Is nothing more
Than empty

Crushing down
Down
Down
Drown me in vacuity
Fill me with lion marigold
Let it bloom.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

Mathew Fu, Age 15



escaping perfection

Catherine Diyakonov, Age 16



Content Note: violent imagery

THOUGHTS OF A BABY

Elijah Chenoweth, Age 17

Born in shit
Raised in bleach
Our mother's dead
She rotted until her head snapped and she couldn't breathe
I walk the earth, a blade runner
No name
No love left
Where is there to go in a world that seeks self-harm?
Why is hell so cold?

FOR YANNICK
Sophie Kerr, Age 17

I've never experienced the complex bulk of true loss.
Not yet.
But I've witnessed the effects of death and catastrophe.
Family may marry these terms as one feeling of loss; loss of temper, loss of family,
loss of home, loss of hope.
But I stand with this evidence who has sat with me.
I have never felt like I've lost anyone.
While they disappear, run, hide, I have planted myself and remembered the ones that left
new freshly ground paths of uneven sorrow.
These overturned roads that family and others will grow over with shriveled and depressed
weeds of irritation and bountiful gardens of benevolence.
From a distance, I speculate, not isolated but intrigued.
I wonder how closure parallels loss; release equals departure.
Can acceptance mean allowing the inevitable to depart,
While welcoming the difficult to understand?
Can we acknowledge them while hating their fears and errors?
While I sit in the corner admiring the separation between action and human, the sensation of
loss bubbles beneath my throat.
This moment may be what loss is.
Perhaps loss is not the immediate visual disappearance of one person or thing.
Perhaps it is the empty croak in the hidden chest locked away under layers of emotion.
Perhaps loss has affected me, but I had been busy and blind and loud.
Perhaps loss weaves itself into acceptance and release without sound or announcement.
Perhaps it is what links humanity together,
The lingering taste of loss in each of our throats,
And the coarse antidote of acceptance and release.



MUSIC

Jadin Tanaka, Age 16

Whenever I feel a little low
or when the worst feels too close
or I need something to comfort me
I put on my headphones and listen

When I close my eyes, I am transported
Varieties of worlds in which I can see, listen and feel
Bent by the sound of a combo of instruments
Every song is a new world

For some, the only thing you see is an empty field with the sounds of wind
For others, you have everything thrown at you, which can be overwhelming
You'll end up liking one type of world compared to another
Or perhaps you'll make worlds of your own

Once the world is over, you're flung back to reality
You're free to explore that world as many times as you want
But eventually you'll return to the real world
Only to come back once more

IRAN

Gloria Rahgozar, Age 16



MEIGUI ROSES

Sue Ho, Age 18



GOLDEN SLUMBERS

Anonymous, Age 16

Change and nostalgia rest on my shoulders.
They bicker and make up quite often.
My preference for either fluctuates like March winds,
Sometimes a flurry, others a truce.

I've grown familiar with these golden slumbers
But I know they'll soon become accounts
That are best told over aged photographs
And winding strolls around town.

Yet I can sense a gust of wind on my cheek.
The calling is clear.
Its presence is imminent and foreign:
An overwhelming aura of new.

Change and nostalgia are at strife again.
Oh how I wish they'd make up and find peace.
But until then,
Let me live within the amenity of my golden slumbers.

BURGUNDY

Adyson Tang, Age 13



A LOVE OF BAKING

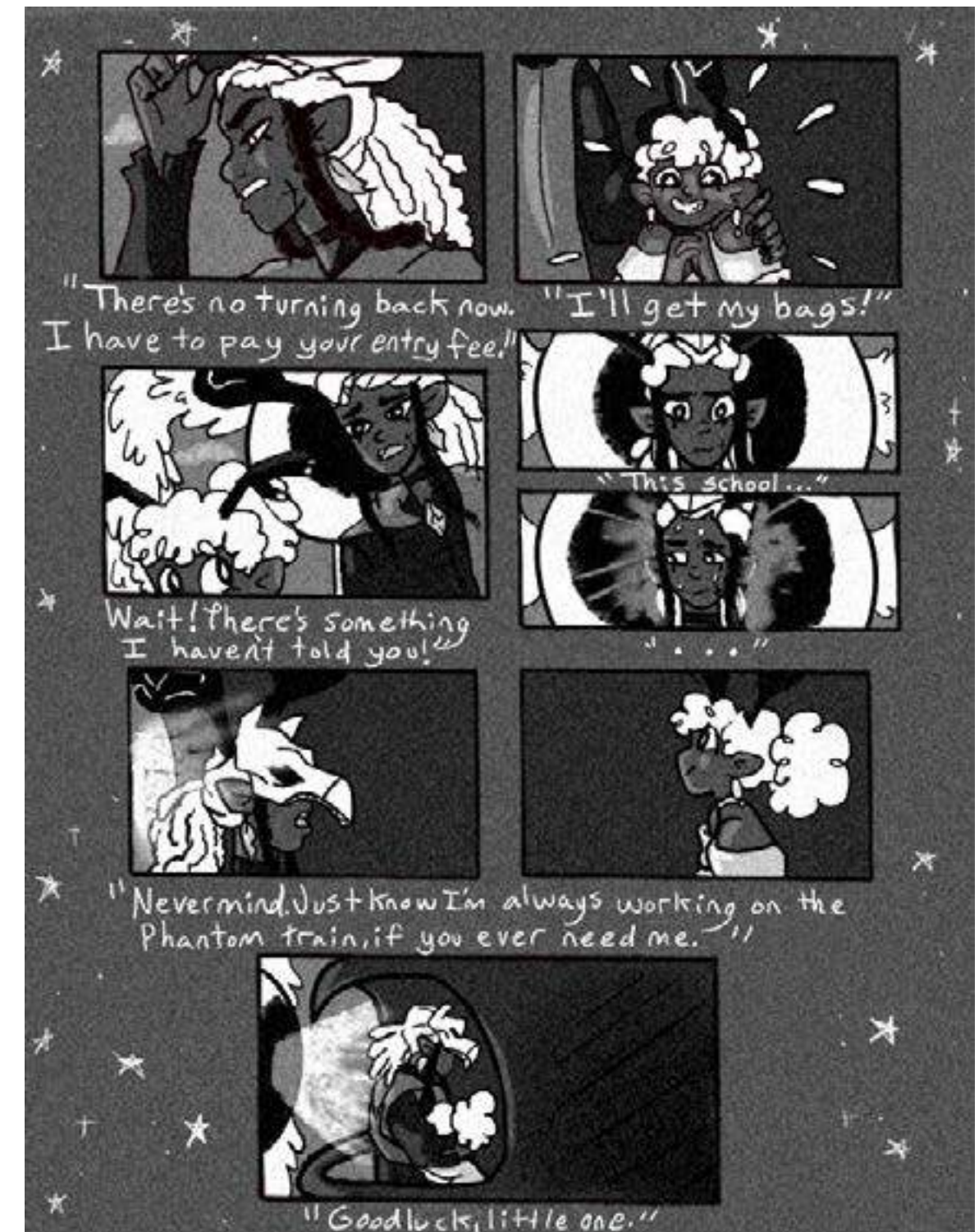
Vivian Nguyen, Age 13

I have been baking since I was a kid. The first thing I baked was a basic sponge cake. At the time, I did not have an oven, so I used a rice cooker to bake the cake. I still remember my reaction. I was so confused, because I could not believe that I could make a cake like in a bakery. My mom gave me a hand mixer for my 8th birthday. I was extremely happy and excited to bake. After 4 years, I bought a lot of baking tools, such as wooden spoons, measuring cups, cake pans, eggbeaters, and especially an oven. I spent 5,000,000 VND (280) USD on all the baking tools that a professional baker needs to have. I can confidently say that my kitchen is a mini bakery. On my 13th birthday, I made cupcakes and egg tarts for my party. My best dessert is cream puffs. The custard filling is great, not too sweet. I also make some traditional cakes like mung bean cakes, and snow-skin mooncakes. My family members are big fans of my baking. I have made a lot of cake failures, but I will never give up. I take mistakes as motivation to help me be better.



LAST STOP

Anai Olarte, Age 15



RUN

Yiyi Lou, Age 16

... He realized that Mr. Kong, like the store owner, looks for reasons behind everything people do, even when there are none.

I said: "No, I didn't realize anything."

"It's just a story, alright?" Angela kept typing.

He only knew he had to run headfirst into whatever comes, like any young person, aware or unaware of consequences.

"I didn't know."

"Knew here means thought." She hurried through the explanation.

"I didn't think that," I said. "Hey, aren't you contradicting yourself? You're talking about why I run. There's no reason. I told you I just want to run"

She ignored me.

"...What's your name?"

"Jack."

"My name isn't Jack."

"What do you know? I'm alluding to Jack Kerouac. Your running has the spirit he described in *On the Road*! Say what you want! I'm done!" Angela slapped the table cinematically and left.

This story is based on a real story involving me, which Angela claimed to have witnessed. She called me over to check a few facts with me. She kept asking me about my attitude towards life, though I told her I have none.

It's a terrible story, but she got it published.

Read it without the last bit, where she talks of young people like an eighty-year-old. It's a little better.

---- The Havana Hippies VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1 ----

Run

Angela, Age 18

As always, Mr. Kong bought breakfast at the supermarket three minutes from school. They have very good buns. As he exited the store, a boy ran towards him from his left. Mr. Kong stepped back out of instinct. But the boy passed him and continued towards school. Mr. Kong lifted his wrist so quickly his watch almost hit his chin. He couldn't be late for the first day of school. It was 8:15. School started at 8:40.

Mr. Kong took three full minutes to walk to school. In the hallway, the boy he had seen earlier sat on the ground by the chemistry classroom. *He must have a hundred questions for Ms. Kenton!* Mr. Kong straightened his back, proud to work in a school with such a diligent student, even though he couldn't answer the student's questions. He taught psychology.

In his own classroom, he ate his buns. Too sweet. *Why so much sugar?* He thought. *Has sugar gotten so cheap? Or am I feeling bitter?* He heard Ms. Kenton's heels and looked into the hall. The boy did not jump up with gleaming eyes as he had pictured. *A shy one*, Mr. Kong noted.

After that, he watched the speeding figure pass the supermarket every morning, then observed him pick dirt out of his nails in the hall. The boy never read any AP Chemistry books as he imagined. He sits there even after Ms. Kenton arrives, picking at his nails. *In deep thought*, Mr. Kong concluded. *What's he thinking about? Oh, he's not into*

chemistry. That's why he never talks with Ms. Kenton. He just wants to think in the school atmosphere every morning.

One morning, with his buns in a small plastic bag, Mr. Kong checked his watch out of habit as he exited the supermarket. One second short of 8:15. Tick, he stepped out of the store. In the same second, the store owner wheeled a wooden cart towards the door, its loose planks clattering. In the same second, the boy flew towards school. At 8:15, the cart tumbled to the sidewalk, wheels in the air, spinning. The boy lay upon it.

"Watch where you're going!" the store owner demanded. "Boys these days!" He exclaimed to Mr. Kong, the only grown-up nearby. "Thinking they're Usain Bolt when they win a little race!"

"I don't think I'm Usain Bolt!" the boy declared.

"Whatever! I need a new cart!" He pointed to the cart's remains, looking to Mr. Kong to confirm it was beyond repair, then to the boy. "Two hundred dollars." He opened his palm.

The boy picked himself up and fished his pockets. "Sorry, I don't have two hundred. Maybe two..."

The store owner felt a nudge. Mr. Kong, who hadn't said anything, handed him two hundred dollars. Seeing that the man stared at him as one stares at a square wheel, he added: "I'm his teacher. He's a hard-working student whom our school is proud to have. He ran because he's so eager to get to school. Please forgive him."

"Why not?" the store owner put the \$200 in his back pocket and waved them off.

"Thanks Mr. Kong," the boy dusted his pants. "I'll pay you..."

"You don't need to!" Mr. Kong replied. "Consider it an award. We're too lucky to have a student like you. Just can't wait to get to school, can you? I see you thinking hard every morning. I've always wondered: what do you think about?"

"I don't really think much," the boy answered. "To be honest, I'm not that excited to get to school. You must have mistaken me for someone else."

"I have not! You run past the store every day. Don't be modest! Why run if you're not..."

"Because I want to run."

"For what?"

"I just want to run."

Mr. Kong looked at the boy as the store owner had looked at him earlier.

But the boy avoided Mr. Kong's eyes. He realized that Mr. Kong, like the store owner, looks for reasons behind everything people do, even when there are none. He only knew he had to run headfirst into whatever comes, like any young person, aware or unaware of the consequences, without hesitation.

A few uneasy, silent seconds passed.

"What's your name?"

"Jack."

"Hey, like Jack Kerouac! Ever read *On the...*"

Jack was already running for the chemistry classroom.

The clock read 8:23.

AN INDUSTRIAL APPLE

Yiyi Lou, Age 16

PRESENTATION

Jadin Tanaka, Age 16

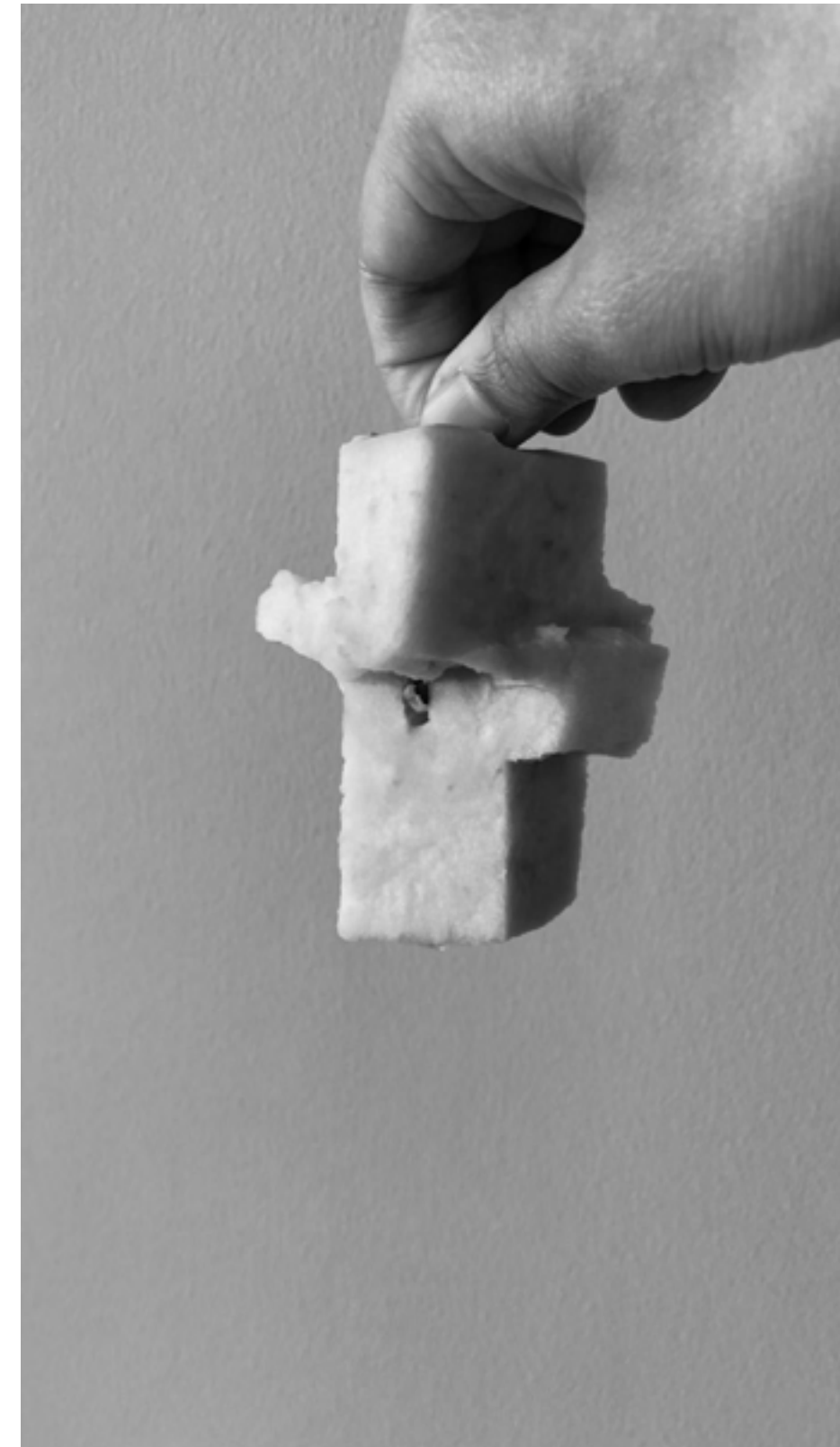
My face did not match my thoughts. I had a passive, slothful look, as if I could fall asleep any minute. As much as it looked like I was trying to concentrate, my mind wandered elsewhere. The current speaker served as a reminder, a warning even, that it was my turn next. I didn't want to think about the dreadful certainty, but my mind came back to it with every distraction. My eye twitched in frustration and worry. The image of others laughing at me lingered like a thorn stuck in my head. The idea of near-silent snickers and giggles around me while I speak. The final judgment of my teacher and classmates. The teacher was known for his harsh criticism. He has made people cry in front of everyone. I hated the idea of me becoming one of those people. Sweat trickled down the side of my head, and I bit the corner of my lip.

My façade started to crack. The gears in my head turned faster, thinking of every possible method of escape. I twiddled my thumbs, had them dance around as another helpless distraction. My eyes darted down to my paper, the project I've been working on for weeks. The paper riddled with scribbles was a failure that I called a script, a tool I'd used onstage to avoid laughable stutters and eye contact. When I glanced back, the speaker gave his closing remarks, gave a small bow followed by a small wave of clapping that echoed in the classroom. I tuned in to the words of judgment that were given, curious if his efforts would be rewarded or berated. The judge decided that his performance should be rewarded, raising the

bar of standards I'd have to somehow meet. I melted with frustration in my seat, murmuring curses I hoped no one heard. I wanted to swap positions with him, for I did not want to go.

Alas, there was no time to be jealous, since my turn was right around the corner. Something in my chest burned at thought of me presenting myself in front of over 30 people. I did anything, anything to help calm myself. I played with my hands, I tried to make small talk with the person beside me. But when I glanced over to the judge, he was reading a list. His eyes followed his finger, scanners that would determine who was next. I panicked; the adrenaline pumped through me. I need to get out of here, I should be outside of this damned place. I prayed with all my heart that my name would not come out of his mouth. My head short-circuited, the gears croaked for fuel, the thorn dug deeper, I closed my eyes and braced for impact.

There are times in which I wouldn't want things to end, but luckily, I was saved. The noise of the bell screamed through the halls, announcing the end of this form of torture. The teacher sighed heavily in defeat and waved his hand, announcing his goodbyes to all of us. A tsunami of relief cleansed me from my nervousness. I smiled, giggled even, and stood up slowly with my legs shaking. Classmates glanced at me confused, but looked away shortly after. I clumsily picked up my bag and hustled out the door, for I had lived to see another day.



GOLDEN HOUR DRIVE-BY

Jenny Nguyen, Age 17



DEAR 19-YEAR OLD SELF

Yuzuh Bishop, Age 14

Dear nineteen-year-old me!

I hope you are alive and well, not killing anyone with your talks or yourself in the process. I wonder where and what you are doing right now. What challenges are you tackling? Are you still crazy about the same guy you liked for three-and-a-half years? Do you still work out and do HIIT like crazy? Do you still listen to Why Don't We? Are you knee-deep in your studies? Are you still learning Karate? If so, that means you've been doing karate for thirteen years! Do you live by yourself? What are you studying at university?

Numerous questions pop into my mind like little fairy lights. But I must encourage you in any way I can, for I do not know what you are going through. You may be living your life to the fullest, or you may feel like you're stuck in the gutter, and nothing is going well. Remember, everyone has problems big and small, everyone has dark histories and pain, but it doesn't mean that one person's pain is bigger or smaller than the other's. Pain is pain, just like joy is joy. Don't give in to the limelight and empty dreams, don't read the glossy guides that tell you how to live in contentment. In the chaos, don't forget why you are living and what your purpose is in life. Never forget that you have a purpose in your life.

I hope you bring smiles to the people around you. I pray to God you are not a curse to others, but always a blessing. You must never compare yourself to others. Only to yourself, a straight line up and down, not right or left.

Well, let's move on to something happier, comedic, maybe? Here's my update on what I have been doing these past few months. I love reading—I know—my love for classics has grown immensely over the past few months. Some books that I have finished reading and love are: *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Rainbow Valley*, *The Queen's Gambit*, *Mortal Engines*, etc. most of them are classics. Right now I'm reading *Jane Eyre*. I must finish by tomorrow, don't ask me why. I love Jane Austen so, so much. But my favourite of all time would L.M. Montgomery. I love *Anne of Green Gables*. I like to convey that I am similar to Anne in some ways, like having a bad temper—oh boy, you might be thinking, has my temper improved in five years? (I hope so.) My favourite fictional ship is Shirbert! Gilbert Blythe has been and will be one my only book crush. I speak with confidence that my love for him will burn like embers in a relentless fireplace. I am trying out *The Bronte Sisters*. I have also started reading *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Bronte. Oh my gosh, I forgot to mention *Emma*, which is an all-time classic (at least for me), by Jane Austen!! Do you remember the time right before lockdown when my older sister and I went to watch *Emma*? That movie was fit for a chef's kiss! My top five favourite series would be *Lord of the Rings*, *Cruel Prince*, *Renegades*, *Legend*, *Warcross*. Argh, I wanted to squeeze one more, oh well. My favourite YA romances would be *5 feet Apart* and *100 Days of Sunlight*. Both of them I own, thanks to my amazing older sister! Don't ask me why they are my favourite or I will launch into a ten-page essay.

Has your love and passion for music deepened with beauty and pain over the years, or has it ceased fire? Have you recorded any of your handwritten songs? You have been recording covers though, yeah? Are you still in choir, orchestra, and band? Do you still take viola, piano, guitar, and voice lessons? Have you learnt any new instruments? Do you like your voice? Has it improved and matured? I am sorry for all the questions (no maybe not). But if you ever forget your purpose, look back at yourself what were you doing, what were you passionate about, what made you happy and sad these last five years?

I will be waiting for a reply, even if I will never be able to read it, for I am only fourteen once. And you are only nineteen only once. We were born to die. Live each year, month, day, and hour as if it is your last!

Love,
Fourteen-Year-Old Me

UNFINISHED IDENTITY

Meaghan Law, Age 16

I LOST MYSELF IN THE MIRROR

Tiffany, Age 16

I lost myself in the mirror
I stood so tightly gripped
onto the soaking countertop

My two eyes turned into a dozen
Half flew through the air
Half grew aware of each other,
now bickering at my throat
They squirmed to see my eyebrows

Curly cues of ribbon
Waving "good-day"
Bow their heads in courtesy
before their snickering match
Fumble, rumble, mumble
two ribbons attack!

My nose begins to itch
crawling uphill to my bridge
Feathers pillow so swiftly,
teasing temptation
My nose shudders, faltering to shake –
Achoo!
A white whirlwind.

My smile is a frown
Red waves among a fleshy ocean
that boils to melt
Drooling mess, scarlet hands
Trickle down my neck

I lost myself in the mirror
A reflecting travesty
A partial disagreement, of who I ought to be



RED HAired GIRL

Nhi Do, Age 17



THE LAST BEAT

Saskia Downard, Age 17

She remembers what she was wearing the day she told him her secret.
Her purple hoodie that lost its tassels in the washing machine.
Her black biker shorts that didn't leave much to the imagination.
Her once-white All Stars with the laces that were too long.

She remembers being annoyed that he asked to go for a walk after she had just walked half an hour to his house. She felt her head split slightly as if it were too full to deal with even the tiniest inconvenience.

The two walked hand in hand and it calmed her slightly. Although the chills of an autumn sunset were creeping, her hand was warm in his. The pressure of his palm reassured her of his love, for its purity had never wavered before. He had a strong heart and she loved it when he fought for her happiness. It made her feel seen. Her panicked state had partially subsided and her courage was crowning. It was now or never.

When They finally told him what had been sucking Their mind dry of space and patience, it felt like They were standing naked in the street.

He was Their first for many things as They were for him, but the one that mattered most right now seemed to crack in front of Their eyes in an instant. The trust broke slowly, like a mirror that was broken while hung up on a wall, each piece dropping one by one. With every unenthusiastic question, every "what if..." or "are you sure?" the rift growing between them rumbled as it spread wider.

Everything They used to touch and think of flowed with his energy. Their world overflowed with only the two of them, small and safe. They felt their world getting bigger and assumed he would grow with Them. Their expectations have always failed Them, this isn't new or unexpected, but They're a gullible fool. The last thing They remember of that day was the long, cold walk home.

COMPANION, FOREVER

Emily Lee, Age 18

On the bed, you rest, silent as always
Your eyes, plastic, but glowing with love

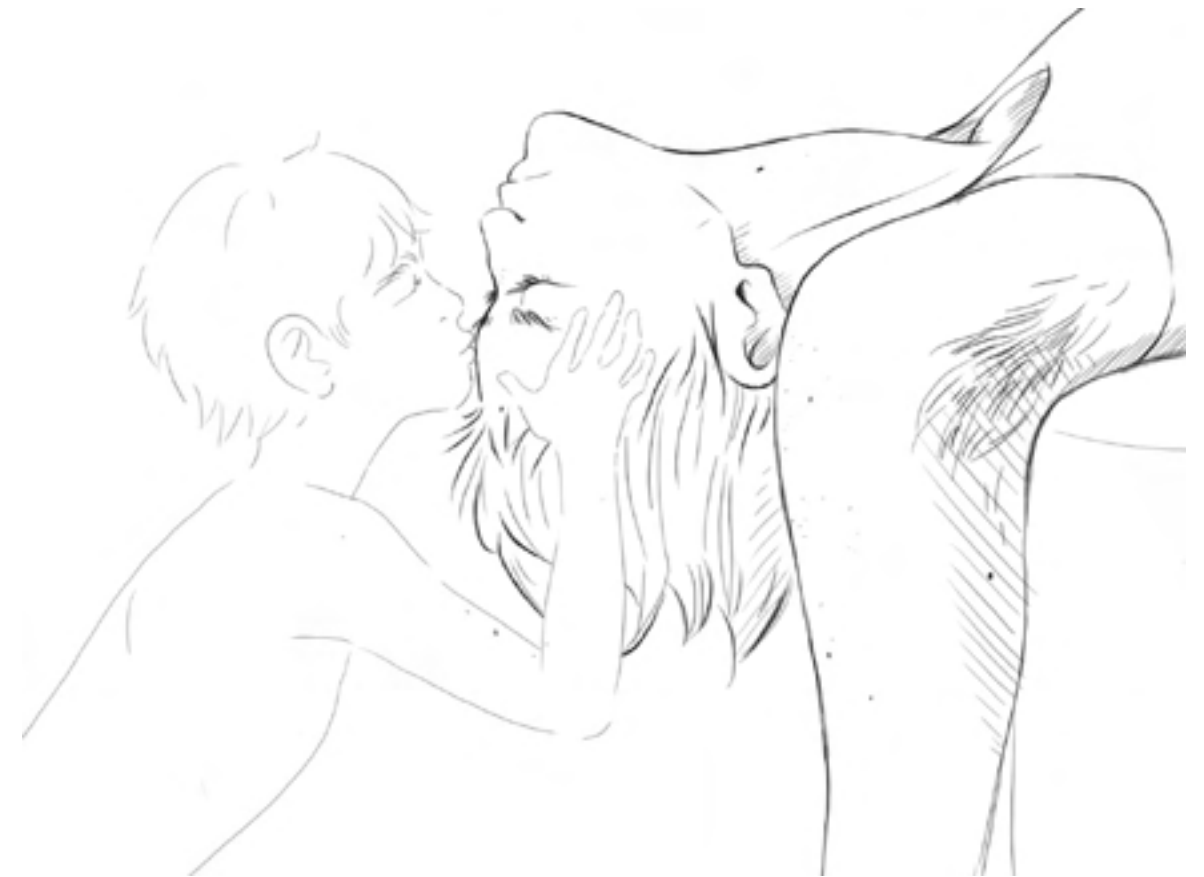
Your white fur, once pristine, is stained grey by time
As though you are alive
As though you've been aging
Along with me
For the last ten years

Your tattered, knotted fur
Still feels as soft as it did
Against my cheek
When I was eight
And I took you everywhere with me

You smell of my childhood
Of home—
My companion, forever

IMPRESSION

Saskia Downard, Age 17



BASKING IN THE SUN

Mabel Xu, Age 16



DEMETER (MY MOTHER'S MESSAGE)

Marian Manapat, Age 18

You must trust the wind 'fore letting go
Else you'll find yourself every spinning
For nobody wants to be alone

Don't dance your way into the unknown
What if you suddenly stop singing?
You must trust the wind 'fore letting go

Love feels easy atop a meadow
But darkness has a way with winning
For nobody wants to be alone

I'll make you stay 'till the blossom's grown
Why are you crying like I'm sinning?
You must trust the wind 'fore letting go

I am the seasons and the wind, no
One knows more about with is chilling
For nobody wants to be alone

What will I do when the seed is sown?
Don't you see what this drought is bringing?
You must trust the wind 'fore letting go
For nobody wants to be alone

THE BUILDING OF THE WRITERS

Mace Carnahan, Age 15

They say there is a building in New York. A building for writers, only visible to those who have been chosen...

My name is Cato Levasseur and I have spent the last five years of my life trying to discover the secrets of this building with its seemingly infinite hallways and doors. I should probably start at the beginning of this story.

I had finished my first book, "Outrun the Night," and was out with my friends to celebrate. Suddenly, a sharply dressed stranger wearing a mask walked up to me and handed me a coin saying only the words, "You will know when you have become one of us. The coin will show you the way. Follow it."

I had almost entirely forgotten about that encounter when weeks later, I noticed something strange on my way to meet a friend. A building I had never seen before on a street I walked along many times. That first time I didn't think much of the building, it was fairly standard for the street it was on, with nothing much out of the ordinary. I barely thought to give it a second glance until I saw the poster on the door which read "Welcoming our newest member, Cato Levasseur." I walked up to the door and knocked. All of a sudden there was a burning in my pocket. I reached down and pulled out the coin that the masked man had given me. It was glowing! I felt an urge to just open the door and walk on in. Then the door opened in front of me so I did what any logical person would do next; I walked in. At least I think I did. There's not much about that day that I can remember. The next thing that I definitely know happened is that I kept walking to my friend's house. I woke up the next morning covered in blood with no recollection of the previous night.

When I woke up, I noticed a red streak on my hand, and then I noticed more red on my arms, when I looked in the mirror and I saw it on my face I knew immediately what it was. I was covered in blood. I looked at the pile of clothes on the floor and there was yet more blood. When I walked out of my bedroom, I saw a glass of orange juice and a note. Sitting on top of the note was the coin. First, I read the note, it contained few words written in a large loopy cursive, "Welcome to the building of the writers." I left the juice where it was and got ready for my day which contained a meeting with my

publisher about the release of my second book.

As I exited through the front door, I saw across the street a building that did not seem out of place for the area it was in. I swear I had seen it before, but I just couldn't quite remember where. There was a poster on the door that read "Welcoming our newest member Cato Levasseur" so I went over to look closer at the poster and, as I walked up, the door swung open.

The man who had opened the door looked a lot like me, but much older, and he said, "Welcome to the building of the writers. We have been expecting you." So I entered. The inside was absolutely magnificent. Bookshelves from floor to ceiling, polished wooden tables, couches, and chairs spaced in groups around the room. The man who let me in never told me his name but in later years I would learn it myself.

That day, the man sat me down and said, "It's long past time we had a conversation, young man." He told me of the building, and the rumors spread by those who knew of it. He told me that there were people who came to this building to find knowledge, people who came based on the rumors, whether true or untrue I cannot say, that it was a magic building. "The one secret that I will tell to you is that only an author, one per generation can truly discover the secrets of this building. You were chosen, and for the sake of us all I hope you were chosen correctly. But enough talking from me. Tell me, what do you seek from this place?"

"I don't quite know yet sir," I replied after some thought. To this day I don't know why I called the man sir, I had some nag in my brain that this man was to be treated with the utmost respect.

My host asked, "Do you know who I am yet?"

"No" I replied.

"Oh my! I am such an ungrateful host. I forgot to offer you a drink, would you care for one? Coffee, tea, anything?"

"I'll take a tea," I replied, "Earl Grey if it's available?" Again, just a nagging feeling that this was the right thing to say.

The man smirked and his hair became a little more sandy blond, his wrinkles became less visible. As he went to grab the tea, I started to think about what this place could be, and what could make it so special. I could think of nothing at the time.

When the man came back holding two Earl Grey teas, he asked, "Do you have a guess as to what makes this place so special?"

I hesitantly replied with a simple, "No."

"Just as well" he said, "I will tell you, but you won't accept it's truth for some time. The building, what makes it special is that it has been imbued with ancient magic. From back in the time of Daedalus and his labyrinth."

"Y-y-you mean the stuff of legends... The magic of the ancient gods?"

"Yes, my boy. The magic of all the ancient gods was put into this building."

"That's unbelievable."

"I warned you that you wouldn't accept it for some time."

"No, I believe it. I'm just in shock."

That was when the house started to shake violently. As I was watching my host, he seemed unfazed by this. Just as quickly, the shaking stopped. The man started talking again but I wasn't paying much attention. I just couldn't stop thinking about what could have caused it. I think an hour had passed when the man said "I can see I have started a thought process in your brain. Come back here tomorrow and we will talk some more. If I have indeed piqued your interest?"

"What time would you like me to return sir?"

"You will know in the morning. For now, I bid you good night."

"Goodnight sir."

When I walked out the door, I noticed that we were not

in the same place as before, which to me seemed obviously connected to the violent shaking that I felt. While I was walking home, I thought long and hard about what could possibly make that building so special. The only thing that I could possibly come to was as the man had said, some sort of ancient magic. I looked around and realized that I had walked long past my house. I also realized that I didn't care, and so I kept walking. The next thing I remember was waking up in my bed two days later. When I walked out of my bedroom, I saw another note on the coffee table. In the exact same place as the last one, in the same writing as last time the note read "meet me downstairs when you are ready." I finished getting ready and did as I was bade, there across the street was the building, in the same place as last time. I walked in the door without knocking and there sitting in the same chair as last time was the old man. He looked tired today, as if he hadn't slept in days. He motioned to the chair I had sat in last time and said "quickly, sit, I haven't got much more time."

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"There are some very important things that I thought I would have more time to explain to you. First off, when I go, and it will be soon you will need to step up and be the keeper of this building. This building used to be home to a group of the best writers in the world. Maybe you will be the one to make it that way again. Second, this building has many, many secrets, if you learn them, you will know the entirety of the origin of this building. Third, it is time you must learn who I am, I am you. My name is Cato Levasseur and I stayed here so that I could warn you about what you must do. Don't lose yourself to the secrets and wonders of this building. Repopulate it with writers and authors of all kinds. Do you understand? Promise me!"

"Yes, I understand. I promise." I replied in utter awe and fascination.

Then my older self slowly started to disappear and within a minute he was gone. Since that day I have been trying my best to keep my promise. Slowly over the past five years this building has had many more people walk through its halls, but our story isn't done yet, and neither is the story of this building.

Not by a long shot.

FROM A BOOK

Christy Wu, Age 16



ACROSTIC POEM

Yuzuh Bishop, Age 14

Yellow blossom
Under pressure
Zeal to groom
Unfit to treasure
Hello and goodbye

Dangerous love
Refreshing and crisp
Endorsing glove
Wonder of a lip

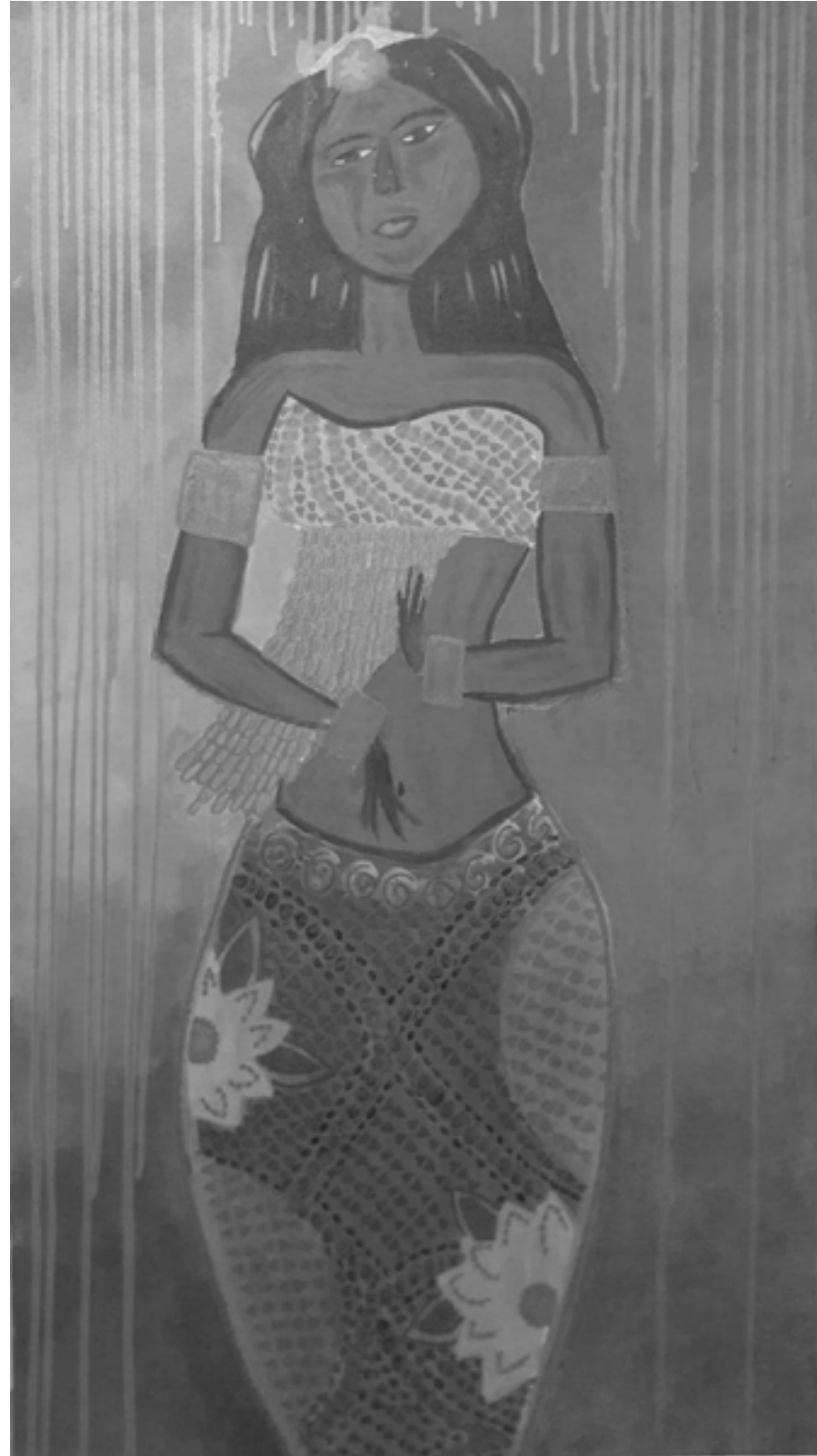
Difficult in nature
Interesting jokes
A love amateur
Never end, never end
Another year of trends

Cream coloured coats
Anger of my little world
Neverending swirls
Detrimental friends
Incomplete visions
Careless words
Endings, opening new beginning

Bitter in taste
Innocent in touch
Selected of fate
Hopeful thoughts in a pouch
One can never deny
Pureness of the sky

MAJESTIC QUEEN

Anya Trivedi, Age 17



BROKEN HEARTED MERMAID

Anai Olarte, Age 15

Oh mistress of the moon.
My mistress.
You shatter my heart and bring it to bliss.
If only I could tell you how I feel.
Rip my fins off, let me have wings.
How can I play my melodies, knowing you cannot hear me sing?
Oh mistress of the moon.
My mistress.
I slowly decay, not feeling your kiss.
Death can not stop my broken heart from breaking.
How much long, until my hurting is over?
Every second on Earth, and I am not your lover.
Oh mistress of the moon.
Not my mistress.
I know, soon you will be "Mrs."
Your eyes for him shatter my soul enough.
The moon marrying the sun will never feel right.
Although he brightens the world, he blinds your sight.
His light can only dry and burn.
Perhaps I am wrong to feel envy.
My emotions stay trapped forever inside me.
I am only a tragic myth, humans will say.
A broken-hearted mermaid, cries for you, alone to this day.

WHERE'S THE END?

Willow Song, Age 16



WHEN THE WORLD CHANGED FOREVER

Khaliya Rajan, Age 13

"Mommy, mommy please tell me that scary story of when you were a kid," said five-year-old Jake.

"Okay, just the one story and then off to bed with you," I replied. "One day, when I was twelve, we came back from a nice vacation to Hawaii during winter break. School started again and everyone was fresh and ready for the new year. On the news, we heard about a virus spreading through China. People were dying, and no one knew how to save them. It was spreading and spreading to other parts of China. We felt bad for the families and prayed that things would get better for them. A few weeks later, we heard that people in other countries were reporting cases and no one knew what kind of virus it was or how to fix people. It became known as the Coronavirus 2019 or COVID-19. Everything changed. Our lives as we knew it ceased to exist. 'Stay at home, stay at home,' said the governments. 'Do not come into contact with people.' That's what we were told.

"In March 2020, people stopped their lives. Only essential workers were allowed to work. Everyone else had to stay home. I always thought essential workers would mean doctors and nurses, but I was wrong. Essential workers are all sorts of people, including people who work at grocery stores to help stock the food, so you can buy it. Also, pharmacists who work at drugstores and help you get your medicine. Through this time, we found out all the people that were essential including people who owned or worked at restaurants and diners. So many people needed food and were not able to or did not want to make food, so they would buy prepared food. Also, essential workers were working so hard they didn't have time to come home and cook, so they would pick up food from restaurants. This was a time when the community came together and so many restaurants and diners started to make care packages for essential workers, so they wouldn't have to

think about food.

"At 7:00 p.m every day for a couple of months, people would bang pots and pans in honour of doctors and nurses who were trying so hard to keep everyone healthy and risking their lives to do so. These people worked tirelessly not being able to see their own families and instead helping out with everyone else's families when they came to the hospital sick.

"My mom, your grandmother, went to the grocery store once a week with a list of things we needed. She'd have to wear a mask and wait in a long line-up to get into the store. At times, the stores would be out of stock of supplies as people were stocking up due to being scared that the stores would run out of food and other products. Some people even went crazy buying so much toilet paper that it became a big joke in the news. For some reason people were scared of running out of toilet paper!

"I was in grade 7 and after spring break we couldn't go back to school. We had to do school online. I missed out on my grade 7 graduation which was a huge celebration at my school. No banquet, no graduation ceremony, no parties. Everything was done virtually, and they mailed us our junior school graduation certificate. That summer we went up to our house in Whistler and went for long walks in the trails hoping we would not run into other people and if we did, we would all make wide pathways to avoid each other. By the end of the summer things seemed to be better.

"In September, schools started up again. But school as we knew it had changed. It was my first year of high school. It was hard being at the big school with everyone wearing masks, one stairwell for up, the other for down. We had to use hand sanitizer before entering classrooms and the teachers would spray the tables and chairs

COVID-19

Dalia McKechnie, Age 13

with antibacterial spray in between each period. We would come in, wipe them down and then our teacher would begin the lesson. No fun activities or parties. I had to have a seat in between my friend and me during lunch. We had designated days to use the cafeteria. We had to go in and out of the school from different doors and gates depending on which grade you were in. No hanging out with friends after school. Grandma didn't even let me take any after school activities unless they were online, not that there was that much to take anyway.

"Suddenly, one day they announced a vaccine had been invented and people got excited. It took a long time to distribute the vaccines and the older people got it first. I was only 13 at the time, so I had to wait longer before I could receive the vaccine. You had to be at least 12 to get vaccinated. Slowly but surely, things started to get back to

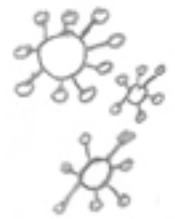
normal, and by 2022, things were returning to normal. At first, it was weird not wearing a mask, giving someone a hug and being close to people at the store. Going to movies and hanging out with friends in the mall was fun but took some time to get used to again. That was the COVID-19 days. The world was happy to see those days gone. The end."

"Thanks for telling me the story, Mommy," said Jake.

"Okay it's late, now get to bed. Let me tuck you in, and you can think good thoughts and how the world endured the worst times, but everyone helped each other and were kind to each other which made it easier for us to handle. Good night, Jake."

"Goodnight, mommy."

D.M.



Covid 19 

A QUIET AUTUMN AFTERNOON

Erica Chen, Age 16

JOY IS...

Teagan Eves, Age 15

Joy is sun pouring through the

gaps between the trees

Joy is the frothy foam that caps the

crashing waves

Joy is holding the hands of

my family & friends

Joy is

running free, with no destination

Joy can be

solving math problems

Joy can be

being stuck in traffic

Joy can be cloudy skies

Joy is what you make of the moment

Joy is a feeling

Joy is an emotion

among other things

Joy can be found anywhere



teens



CALLING TEEN WRITERS & ARTISTS!

ink

Teen journal for writing and visual art via
VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Submit your writing and artwork and you could be published in *ink*, a teen journal for writing and visual art published by Vancouver Public Library.

WRITING: two works (max 1,000 words)
VISUAL ART: two works (digital art, comic or photograph)
Deadline: May 1, 2022

See full submission details at vpl.ca/teens.



Vancouver Public Library

For more information
604.331.3603 | vpl.ca/events

Join the conversation
 @vpl /vancouverpubliclibrary

February 11, 2018

ink

updated ink submit: *Teen journal for writing and visual art via*
VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Submission Guidelines

You may submit up to four pieces each year:

- Two pieces of writing per person
- Two visual pieces per person - a piece of artwork, a comic OR a photograph

Writing: 1,000 word maximum. Typed entries preferred, but not required.

Visual art: 8.5 x 11 inches preferred. Black and white artwork only. You may be required to submit your original artwork if your work is selected for publication.

- **Digital Art:** High resolution. Minimum 300 dpi. Black and white only.
- **Photographs:** High resolution. Minimum 300 dpi. Black and white only.
- **Comics:** One 8.5 x 11 inch page maximum.

We welcome voices from teens aged 13 – 18 living in the City of Vancouver. We are looking for creative, original, thought-provoking, diverse, and engaging work. Submissions including hate speech, exclusionary language, or excessively graphic depictions of sexual encounters and violence will not be published. *Please review and edit your work for any grammatical errors before submitting.*

Submission Form

Please attach completed forms to your submission and drop off at any Vancouver Public Library branch, or email to teens@vpl.ca. **Submissions must be received by May 1, 2022.**

Last name _____ First name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Postal code _____ Age _____ Submission date _____

Title of submission: _____

Type of submission:

Art Comic Fiction Poem Review Other _____

Where did you hear about *ink*?

Ink volume 5, 2022 (the "Program")

SUMMARY

We are pleased that your child is participating in the Program at the Vancouver Public Library. As part of the Program, your child will undertake projects, create new content, and express ideas in physical and/or digital forms (the "Content"). By signing this consent and licence form, you consent to and licence VPL to collect your child's Content to use for non-commercial purposes, such as, but not limited to, use in program brochures, on public displays, or through the Internet in any format or medium or published in an anthology in physical and/or digital forms and made available to be borrowed from any branch of the Vancouver Public Library (the "Purpose").

CONSENT

- YES**, I consent for my child's Content to be used for the Purpose
- NO**, I do not consent for my child's Content to be used for the Purpose
- YES**, I consent to be contacted by email about *ink*
- NO**, I do not consent to be contacted by email about *ink*
- YES**, I consent to be contacted by email about writing and arts programs at VPL
- NO**, I do not consent to be contacted by email about writing and arts programs at VPL

GRANT OF LICENCE

On behalf of my child, I hereby grant to VPL an irrevocable, non-exclusive, non-transferable, royalty-free licence to use my child's Content for the Purpose, to lend that Content to VPL's patrons in VPL's sole discretion, and the unrestricted right in perpetuity to keep, copy, use, publish, display, and/or broadcast the Content.

I acknowledge there will be no money or other compensation payable by the Vancouver Public Library to me for the use of my child's Content. The copyright in the Content is and will remain the exclusive property of me/my child and no right,

title, or interest in or to the copyright in the Content is granted to VPL other than a limited right to use the Content under the terms of this consent. I agree that VPL is granted free of charge and forever the right to edit and modify the Content as it sees fit without my/my child's consent (otherwise known as "waiver" of artistic or moral rights under copyright law).

WAIVER AND RELEASE

In consideration for my child being permitted to participate in the Program, I hereby release and forever discharge VPL from any and all liability for any and all losses, damages, injuries, harm, or expenses of any kind that I or my child may suffer, incur, or experience in any way arising from or in connection with any act or omission of my child.

I confirm that I have read and accept the contents of this document.

Child's Name (print)

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Parent/Guardian's Name (print)

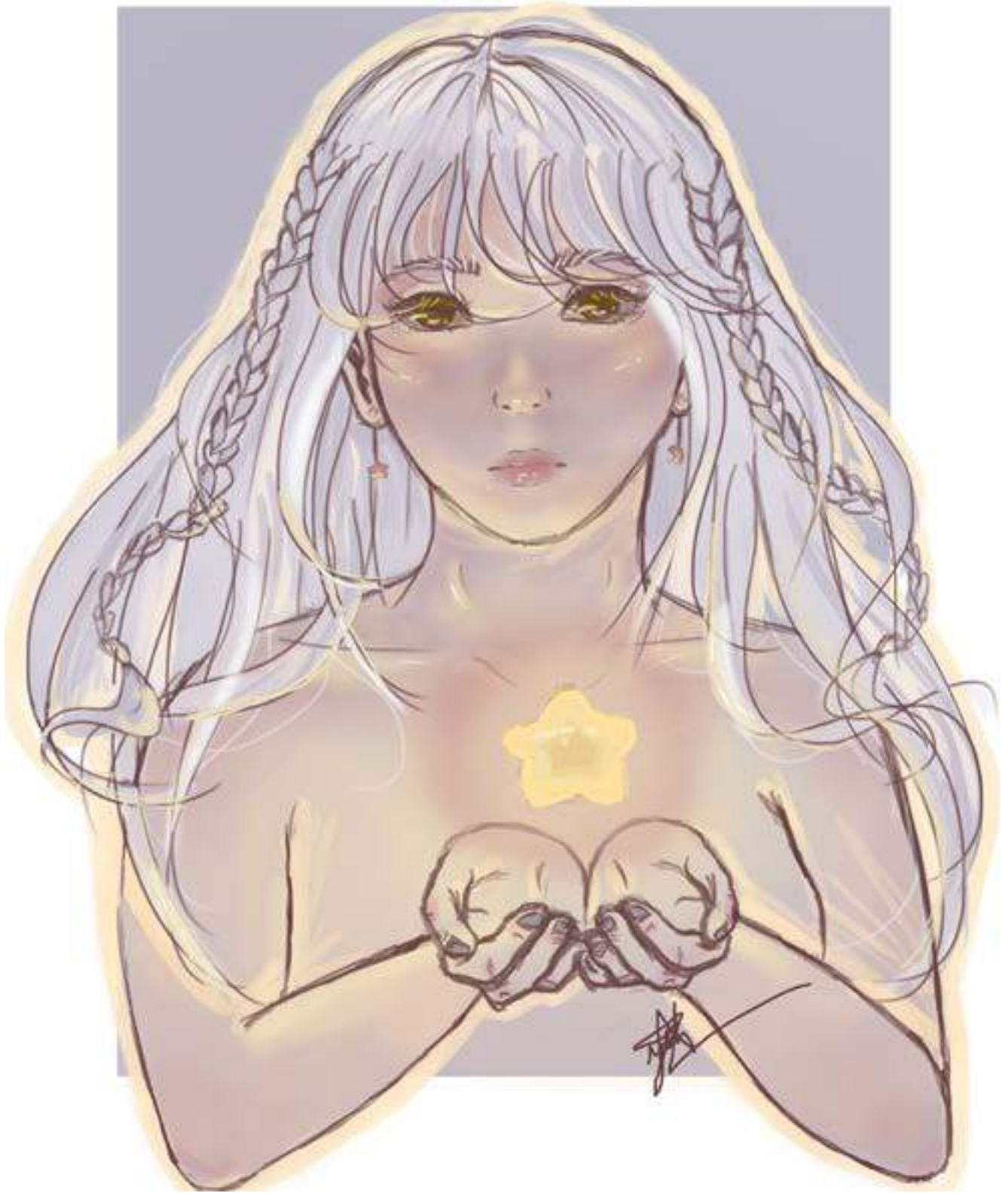
Address and Phone Number

Witness Signature

Witness Name (print)

Witness Address and Phone Number

Content Name/Location (for staff use)



LUCIDUS
Kara Yeh, Age 17



This volume of ink was generously supported by the Diamond Foundation